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A COMMENTARY
ON THE
GOSPEL OF S. MARK.

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BY THE VERY REVEREND
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INTRODUCTION.

THE Commentary upon the Gospel according to S. Mark, contained in this volume, is a sequel to the Commentary upon S. Matthew published about two years ago. It is composed upon the same principles, and intended for the same class of readers; that is to say, it is intended for the use of those whose only familiar language is English, and it is constructed with the view of bringing out the distinguishing features of S. Mark, so far as they can be recognized and understood by an English reader.

I endeavoured to make my design comprehended when I published my Commentary upon S. Matthew's Gospel, by stating in the opening of the Introduction the class for whom it was written; but it seems to have been held by some of the critics who have noticed that work, that I had precluded them from treating it as a volume intended for plain folks unacquainted with Greek, because I had expressed my hope "that my labours might be made useful to *fellow-students* of God's Holy Word." Fellow-students, these critics appear to hold, must mean those who study the Scriptures in the original; and although I had expressly confined my class of readers to "those whose only familiar tongue is English," this term *fellow-students* has been regarded as undoing the restriction, and forbidding the volume to be treated in the way which the author himself prescribed.

It may be that there was some ambiguity in the mode of expression adopted by me; and I should not have thought it worth

while to find fault with my critics, had it not been that in reality this term *fellow-students*, at which some of them have stumbled, expresses, when taken in conjunction with the assertion that I wrote for English readers, the spirit and intention of my former Commentary and of that now published also. It appeared to me, that, although much interesting matter which has been brought to light by learned men must always be inaccessible to those who cannot examine the Gospels in the original, and cannot use learned commentaries upon them, yet there were many things which might be rendered intelligible, and some help given towards the solution of questions which must rise up in the minds of all thoughtful readers. This view was probably strengthened by the circumstance, that while in Cambridge I had during two years a Bible Class in connection with the "Working Men's College." In this class we determined to study the Gospels; and before I resigned it we had completed an examination of the first two. In preparing materials for the lectures, which were given on Sunday evening, I carefully abstained from dwelling upon those topics which belonged more properly to the pulpit, and I rather selected those which were likely to open up to my students new lines of thought concerning passages with which they were all familiar. I found it very possible to interest the working men by this mode of dealing, and I had their own testimony that on many points connected with the Gospels they had gained new light from the lectures. These working men I have no hesitation in acknowledging as "fellow-students of God's Holy Word;" and possibly it might have been the remembrance of the evenings spent in the lecture-room, that suggested the phrase to my mind when I wrote the Introduction to the Commentary on S. Matthew's Gospel.

But it is not amongst working men only that readers are to be found, who, in studying the Scriptures, may use with advantage a Commentary such as I have endeavoured to supply. There is

in England a large class of highly intelligent persons, who have not had a learned education, and to whom nevertheless many questions, which require for their full discussion an apparatus of learning not possessed by them, may be rendered interesting and instructive. I do not say that I have succeeded in meeting the wants of this class, but I have endeavoured in some measure to do so; and, whether I have succeeded or not, I am sure that the wants are real and such as ought to be met and supplied.

Having thus attempted to make more apparent the design both of the former Commentary on S. Matthew and of the present Commentary on S. Mark, I will crave the reader's attention while I make some observations, by way of introduction, upon certain points connected with S. Mark's Gospel. In doing so I shall bear carefully in mind the class of readers for whom the Commentary is intended, and shall therefore abstain from the discussion of many points which would find place in a more complete introduction to S. Mark.

I.—*The authorship of the Gospel.*

In the introduction to the Commentary on S. Matthew I stated that all discussion concerning the claim of that Apostle to be regarded as the author of the Gospel bearing his name was beside my purpose; and in like manner I shall here assume, and not prove, that the Gospel bearing the name of S. Mark was really written by him. In truth there seems to be as little reason for doubting concerning the authorship as concerning any fact in ancient history. The tradition which assigns the second Gospel to S. Mark is universal, unvarying, uncontradicted; and the Mark to whom tradition points is he who comes under our notice several times in the Acts of the Apostles and incidentally in the Epistles.¹

¹ As to the identity of the Mark of Acts xii. 12, and the Marcus of 1 Pet. v. 13, see below, page xv.

I shall in another section of this Introduction put together the scattered notices which we have of his life; in this it is my intention, upon the assumption that S. Mark was really the author of the second Gospel, to say something concerning the connection between that Gospel and the Apostle Peter, to which attention will frequently be called in the following Commentary. Tradition, which assigns the authorship of the Gospel to S. Mark, no less certainly teaches that S. Peter was in some very decided manner connected with the authorship. The precise nature and extent of this connection have not been as yet settled beyond controversy by learned men, and it would be absurd to attempt a settlement in this place; it may be stated however that the controversy turns very much upon the meaning to be attached to a phrase, several times used concerning S. Mark, and which may be rendered *the interpreter of Peter*. Mark, according to a very general tradition, was *the interpreter of Peter*; but in what sense was he *the interpreter*? Was he an amanuensis or secretary? or was he one who translated the words of Peter from one language to another? or was he both?

These questions will be chiefly interesting to the readers of this volume as they are illustrated by the study of the Gospel itself. The readers whose wants I am chiefly endeavouring to meet are not likely to arrive at any satisfactory settlement of a difficult point, concerning which they will find competent authorities in conflict; but if they rise from the perusal of S. Mark's Gospel with the conviction that they have been in reality holding converse with S. Peter himself, that they have been listening to reports from an eyewitness, and that S. Mark, instead of being a collector of materials for the history of our Lord, is the mouthpiece of one of the most favoured of the Apostles, then they will feel that the connection of S. Mark with S. Peter is not a merely antiquarian curiosity, but a point of very living interest. Let a man's view of inspiration be what

it may, he can hardly regard it as a matter of indifference whether Peter left behind him his own record of our Lord's life or not; and with reference to the objections which have been too frequently made of late years to the character of the Gospels, as trustworthy records of what Jesus did and taught, the intimate connection of Peter with the authorship of one of them is a consideration of first-rate magnitude.

I would venture to put before the reader the following view as at least probable. S. Peter in all probability committed to writing memoranda of his Master's life; or, if they were not committed to writing, there might be certain portions upon which he chiefly dwelt and which he made the subject of his oral teaching; the history of the Lord's life thus given by S. Peter seems to have been translated into Greek from the Syro-Chaldaic, in which Peter wrote or delivered it, by S. Mark. I think that the phenomena of the Gospels require us to suppose that the substance of S. Mark's Gospel existed at one time in a written form in the Syro-Chaldaic language of S. Peter,—whether committed to writing by S. Peter himself, or put on record by S. Mark as his secretary, matters not; but I think also that the whole Gospel in its finished connected form never existed in that language, but only in the Greek of S. Mark, as we now have it.

I do not suppose that this view will meet with general acceptance; I only set it down as that, which, after a good deal of consideration, appears to me the most probable approximate solution of a question which is not likely ever to be answered completely. I am not anxious to persuade my readers to adopt it; if they can find a better, let them do so; I am much more anxious to make them see that the complete clearing up of the difficulty is not a matter of very much importance, while the recognition of S. Peter's intimate connection with the Gospel *in some way or other* undoubtedly is so. And I wish them to perceive that the want of a theory concerning S. Peter's authorship,

which shall be entirely free from cavil, need not preclude them from recognising S. Peter's hand continually throughout the narrative, and enjoying the feeling of satisfaction which will almost certainly arise from the conviction that they have in their hands the memoirs of S. Peter himself.

It should be added, that, although it is impossible for any careful reader not to perceive that the Gospel according to S. Mark is in some way intimately connected with S. Peter, it is not so easy to explain upon this supposition all the phenomena of the Gospel. I mean that in examining the facts and conversations which S. Mark has recorded, and noting those which from the other Gospels we perceive that he has omitted, it is not easy by referring to S. Peter as the virtual author of the work to say in all cases why this was inserted and that passed over. For examples : it may seem strange that the walking on the water, the blessing pronounced upon S. Peter on occasion of his famous confession of Jesus as the Son of God, and the miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish, should all have been omitted from this Gospel. I have endeavoured in the Commentary to suggest in some cases reasons for such omissions, but I do not lay any great stress upon the reasons. I think it much more important to observe, that the Gospel of S. Mark has no appearance of having been written in accordance with any preconceived notion of what was likely or unlikely to come from the mouth or pen of S. Peter ; if a dishonest person had written the book with the intention of giving it to the world in the name and under the authority of S. Peter, I feel confident that the work would have been very different from that which by God's providence has come into our possession. S. Peter's hand is in it beyond all question, but how his hand was applied, and to what extent the Gospel is his, cannot be put beyond doubt ; and this very uncertainty is the best pledge that can possibly be given of the truth of that, which after all is the important point, namely, that

in reading the second Gospel we are in reality holding communication with an eye-witness of the deeds and an ear-witness of the words of Jesus Christ our Lord.

II.—*The internal peculiarities of S. Mark's Gospel.*

By far the most interesting and valuable characteristic of S. Mark's Gospel is its clear, minute, and graphic style of narrative. In this respect his Gospel stands in contrast with that of S. Matthew, of which it has sometimes been most unjustly regarded as a mere abridgment. That S. Mark was in any sense an abbreviator of S. Matthew is a notion, which (as it appears to me) can be held only by those who have taken no trouble whatever to compare the works of the two evangelists. That the greater portion of the history found in S. Mark may also be found in S. Matthew, that in the latter portion of the two Gospels the coincidence is often very close, and that S. Matthew's Gospel is much longer than that of S. Mark, all this is undoubtedly true; but if a story be taken which has been recorded by the two Evangelists, and if the two records be placed side by side and compared, it will be found in general that S. Mark, so far from being an abbreviator of S. Matthew, is much more minute and full. My own opinion, after having had the subject under consideration for some years, is, that neither did S. Matthew ever see S. Mark's Gospel in its present condition, nor S. Mark see S. Matthew's; the coincidences between the two are rather to be accounted for upon the supposition that S. Matthew had access to some of those materials, which were also and independently used in the composition of the Gospel of S. Mark.

The attention of the reader will be frequently called, in the course of the following Commentary, to points illustrating the characteristics of S. Mark's style which have been above alluded to. His attention will also be called, perhaps so frequently as to appear to him sometimes tiresome, to the relation in which

passages of this Gospel stand to parallel passages of S. Matthew. I take this opportunity of apologising to the reader if he should be offended with this feature of the Commentary, and of begging him to believe that he will find much useful employment in following out the hints which are given, and that the result of his study will be in all probability the persuasion that S. Mark's Gospel has little justice done to it by the popular estimate which has been formed of it. In the minds of many readers of the New Testament it is still, if I mistake not, a mere abbreviation of S. Matthew; an examination of the parallels between the two Evangelists will infallibly explode this notion, and consequently raise the general appreciation of the value of S. Mark's Gospel, regarded as a portion of that volume, which the Holy Spirit has indited for the benefit of the Church, and which God's providence has preserved as her chief treasure.

One distinction between the first two Gospels is to be found in the difference of the qualities of the readers, for whom they were respectively, in the first instance, chiefly designed. S. Matthew's Gospel is manifestly directed especially to Jewish readers; S. Mark's, although coming as we have seen primarily and principally from the Apostle of the circumcision, is not in any way adapted to the peculiar wants and feelings of Jews, but rather to the common wants and feelings of mankind. The openings of the two Gospels sufficiently point out the difference between them in this respect: S. Matthew's Gospel bears in its first verse the significant phrase, *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*; S. Mark no less significantly commences his Gospel with the broader description of the character of our Lord contained in the words, *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. Yet if any one should suppose that the second Gospel was written from a decidedly and exclusively Gentile point of view, he would find his supposition contradicted by the facts of the case; for

example, S. Mark quotes ancient prophecy as having been fulfilled in Christ, though not nearly so copiously as does S. Matthew;¹ and he does not omit the story of the Syrophenician woman, containing though it does the strong language of our Lord concerning the taking away of the bread of Israelitish children and casting it to Gentile dogs. It would in fact, I think, be more correct to say, that S. Mark's Gospel was not written especially for Jews, than that it was written especially for Gentiles: in the trifling circumstance of the explanation of Hebrew terms being given, it may be asserted that there is evidence of adaptation to Gentile wants, but taken on a broader and deeper view of its character and purposes it may be rather said to regard the Lord Jesus Christ and His life upon earth from that point, which does not belong exclusively either to Jew or Gentile, but is the common property of both. And thus S. Mark's Gospel appears to symbolise the real relation in which S. Peter stands to the Gentile world; S. Peter was emphatically the Apostle of the circumcision, and yet it was he who was chosen by God to be the first preacher to the Gentile world in the person of Cornelius the Centurion; and the Church of Rome, the great light of early Gentile Christianity, claims S. Peter as its principal founder. In fact, Jew and Gentile were in Christ made one, the middle wall of partition was broken down, and so an Apostle of the circumcision could not be an Apostle of the circumcision exclusively; even as the Lord, who declared Himself sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, did nevertheless gather together other sheep not of that fold. S. Mark's Gospel then is a Gentile Gospel, but it is all the more truly so because

¹ *Nine* instances of reference to prophecy are noted in the margin of the Commentary; but it should be observed that of these, *six* occur in reported discourses of our Lord, and of the remaining three, viz. Chap. i. 2, 3, and Chap. xv. 28, the last is not very well supported by manuscript authority. Thus the Evangelist's own reference to the Old Testament scriptures is very sparing indeed.

it springs from the very heart of Judaism; even as Christ was lifted up from the earth to gather all men unto Him, and yet bore on His head the superscription, *The King of the Jews*.

One peculiarity of S. Mark's Gospel, as compared with S. Matthew's, is obvious to the most cursory reader, namely, the omission of the longer discourses and of many of the parables of the Lord. Only four parables are recorded; and the sermon on the Mount and the great woe-discourse, which in S. Matthew's Gospel open and terminate respectively the public ministry of the Lord, are by S. Mark alike omitted. In this striking fact alone we have, as I think, abundant disproof of the notion that S. Mark was an abbreviator of S. Matthew: it is easy to say that we do not know the principle upon which he abridged, and therefore cannot say positively what he would omit and what retain; but I confess myself unable to conceive of any principle of abridgment, which could lead a writer, who, with S. Matthew's Gospel before him, was preparing a new Gospel for the Gentile world, to omit deliberately from his pages so many of the solemn utterances of his Master. That S. Mark's Gospel is such as it is convinces me that the author never had S. Matthew's Gospel in his hands; and this becomes the more evident when it is observed, that S. Mark is as much fuller in the delineation of action as he is more brief in the record of words.

It is noticed in the proper place in the following Commentary that the last eleven verses of the concluding chapter are in all probability not by the hand of S. Mark himself. Assuming this to be the case we perceive that the Gospel according to S. Mark, properly so called, is a fragmentary history; and that, not only as failing to record everything which Jesus did and taught, in which sense every written history could not fail to be fragmentary, but also as closing abruptly after the record of the Resurrection, and omitting altogether the great event of the Ascension of the Lord into heaven. It may seem strange that such an omis-

sion should have been made; but it is a significant fact that the omission is common to the other two Gospels which claim immediate Apostolic authority, and that only in the Gospel according to S. Luke is the Ascension made a part of the regular consecutive narrative. Possibly in the case of S. Mark we may say that the author of the Gospel confined himself strictly to those portions of the Lord's life, for which he had the written testimony of S. Peter, or which he had received orally from that Apostle; nor can we be surprised to find Apostolic teaching culminating in the Resurrection; this was *the* point of the message of the Apostles to the world, as we see from the book of their Acts and from their Epistles; if this were admitted, the Ascension would (so to speak) follow as a necessary consequence, for a resurrection, which again terminated in death and corruption, would have been no real triumph over the grave, and useless as a ground for the faith of mankind. And therefore, although according to the rules of art S. Luke's history must be accounted the most complete, terminating as it does with the session of the Lord Jesus after His troubles and weariness on earth in the bliss of Heaven at the right hand of the Father, still there is a beauty of their own belonging to the three other Gospels; S. Matthew, S. Peter, and S. John follow their Master until He is given back to them from the grave, and then they leave Him; and they seem to imply that He is still with the Church, as indeed He is. S. Luke says, *He was parted from them*; but the Apostles themselves rather conceal the parting, and dwell upon that other equally true view of the case, which is expressed in the Lord's own words as recorded by S. Matthew, *Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*.

For the further development of the general view which I have here endeavoured to give, I must refer to the Commentary; and I now pass on to notice those portions of Gospel history, for which we are indebted to S. Mark.

III.—*On the special contributions made by S. Mark to the Gospel history.*

In the margin of the Commentary I have given references to the parallel passages in S. Matthew and S. Luke, as in the Commentary on S. Matthew I gave references to S. Mark and S. Luke.¹ The reader will thus perceive at a glance how much of absolutely fresh history is added by S. Mark to what we know from the other two Evangelists, and he will verify a conclusion to which he has probably long ago come, namely, that the portions of history contributed by S. Mark are extremely few. Hence it will be unnecessary to examine this Gospel chapter by chapter, as was done in the case of S. Matthew, and to point out what is new in each; it will be better to call attention to the few contributions made by S. Mark, and then to add a remark or two on the general character of his Gospel regarded as supplementary to those of the other Evangelists.

The special contributions of S. Mark are one parable, and two miracles.

The parable is recorded in Chap. iv. 26—29, and is that in which the kingdom of God is compared to seed cast into the ground, which grows up the sower knoweth not how. It is remarkable that out of the small number of parables (only four) recorded by S. Mark, one should be peculiar to himself; it is remarkable also that the three, which are recorded in the chapter above quoted, are all based upon the same foundation, namely, the idea of *growth*; the first brings out the necessity of good ground in order that the seed may take root and flourish; the second illustrates the manner of the increase of God's kingdom by reference to the mysterious germination of seed by its inherent vitality without human help; and the third dwells upon the

¹ I have explained in my Introduction to the Commentary of S. Matthew why S. John is excluded.

amazing magnitude of the tree which sometimes springs from a very small seed. Hence it will be seen that S. Mark's parable is a real addition to that which he has in common with the other two Evangelists; it throws into prominence the divine life which belongs to the blessed seed of the Gospel, and reminds us that, even while men sleep, an active agency is at work, and the divine purposes are being unfolded.

Of the two miracles peculiar to S. Mark the first is recorded in Chap. vii. 32—37, and the second in Chap. viii. 22—26. The one is the healing of a deaf man, and the other of a blind. I have marked both of them in the margin of the Commentary as *private* miracles; in the former miracle the Lord took the man aside from the multitude, in the latter He took the man and led him out of the town, and in both cases He enjoined secrecy. Each miracle presents features of peculiar interest. I would especially notice in one of them the *sigh* with which our Lord performed the miracle, in the other the gradual character of the cure; the blind man first saw men as trees walking, and then saw everything plainly. It may be noticed also as a coincidence between these two miracles, that in the former Christ spit and touched the man's tongue, in the other He spit upon the blind man's eyes. Without pronouncing any opinion of the relative value of different portions of Scripture, it may be safely asserted, that in these two miracles of S. Mark we have a real addition to that knowledge of our Lord's manner of performing His mighty works, which we are able to gain from the other Evangelists.

In Chap. xiv. 51, 52, there is a story, for which we are indebted to S. Mark, and which is perhaps sufficiently remarkable to be noted here. It is that of the young man, who followed the Lord after His apprehension in the garden of Gethsemane, and who, being seized by the young men, left in their hands the linen cloth with which he was covered, and fled away naked. But this little episode is so completely subsidiary to the general

story of the Lord's apprehension, that it hardly interferes, if at all, with the statement above made, that the special contributions of S. Mark are one parable and two miracles; indeed the very circumstance, that a commentator upon S. Mark should feel tempted to note so trivial a portion of history as a special contribution to our knowledge of the Lord's life, shews how very few in number those special contributions must be.

In truth the peculiar excellence and value of this Gospel is not to be sought in the additions made by it to the knowledge which we have from other sources of what Jesus did and said. Any one who examines it with this view will take that low estimate of its position amongst the four evangelical pillars of the truth, which has I fear been too common; he will be satisfied with the rough and absolutely false conclusion, that the second Gospel is only an abridgment of the first. The real additions made by S. Mark are those countless little touches which indicate the direct testimony of an eye or ear-witness, or which, if they do not do this, at least give evidence of such individuality of character as to render the hypothesis of dependence upon the other Evangelists altogether untenable. These little additions will be brought under the notice of the reader in the course of the Commentary; and though they may add little to our actual knowledge, they will, I trust, appear to him of first-rate importance as bearing upon the question of the peculiar value of S. Mark's Gospel. I had intended in this place to give examples, but upon consideration I think it is unnecessary to do more than allude to a feature which will be illustrated so frequently hereafter.

I cannot however leave this subject without bearing testimony to the effect produced upon my own mind by the daily examination of S. Mark's Gospel, rendered necessary in the composition of the following Commentary. I never felt before so vividly and strongly the immense loss which the Church would have sustained, if she had been deprived of this version of the history of

our Lord. No other Gospel seems to bring the Saviour and His daily life so freshly before the mind's eye, and to make the student feel as he reads the history that he is really placed by the historian in the midst of the events recorded. No other Gospel, I think, needs so little the help of learned men and laborious investigation to prove its authenticity; the careful reader soon becomes convinced that no ingenious forger could have thrown into his work so many marks of originality, and given it so individual a character.¹ A person undertaking to abbreviate an already existing Gospel, could by no possibility have produced such a Gospel as this.

IV.—*On the Life and Ministry of S. Mark.*

Tradition assigns the authorship of the second Gospel to a Mark, who was associated in a very intimate manner with S. Peter, and therefore is identified almost certainly with that Mark, who is spoken of in 1 S. Pet. v. 13, under the title of *Marcus my son*. Whether the person so associated with S. Peter be identical with John Mark, the son of Mary (Acts xii. 12), and with the Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, concerning whom the sharp dispute arose between that Apostle and S. Paul, it is

¹ Dean Alford writes as follows: "Of the first three Gospels, that of Mark is the most distinct and peculiar in style. By far the greater part of these graphic touches which describe the look and gesture of our Lord, the arrangement or appearance of those around Him, the feelings with which He contemplated the persons whom He addressed, are contained in this Gospel. While the matters related are fewer than in either Matthew or Luke, Mark, in by far the greater number of common narrations, is the most copious, and rich in lively and interesting detail. In one part only does Mark appear as an abridger of previously well known facts; viz. in Chap. i. 1—13, where, his object being to detail the official life of our Lord, he hastens through the previous great events, the ministry of John, the baptism and temptation of Christ. But even in the abrupt transitions of this section, there is wonderful graphic power, presenting us with a series of life-like pictures, calculated to impress the reader strongly with the reality and dignity of the events related."

difficult to establish beyond controversy; the identity has generally been believed, but has also been questioned by learned men with much show of reason; it is however quite unnecessary here to enter upon the argument; let it suffice to grant that the author of the Gospel was Mark, described by S. Peter as his son, that is, probably his son in the Gospel, (though some have supposed that the Apostle intended to speak of his own son after the flesh,) and to grant further that this Mark was the companion, and in some sense the interpreter, of the Apostle.

Even if all the notices of Mark in the New Testament be referred to one person, and he be granted to be the Evangelist, we have still very little information concerning his life and ministry. We should regard him then as the son of one of the early converts at Jerusalem, whose house was one of the places of meeting for the disciples of Christ; we should attribute his conversion to S. Peter, and should conclude that his relationship to Barnabas led him to attach himself to that Apostle while he was the companion of S. Paul, and that while with them he shrank from the work assigned to him, and so incurred S. Paul's displeasure; we should find him in consequence rejected afterwards as a coadjutor by S. Paul, and adopted as such by Barnabas; and finally we should discover an incidental proof that S. Mark succeeded in regaining S. Paul's confidence, and a proof likewise of the forgiving and courteous spirit of S. Paul, in the declaration made to Timothy,¹ that Mark was *profitable to him for the ministry*, and in the request made to the Colossians,² that if Mark came to them they would receive him.

For the purpose however of this Commentary it is quite unnecessary to attempt to settle the question, whether S. Mark the Evangelist and Mark sister's son to Barnabas were the same person; the important thing is to identify the writer of the Gospel with him who was the companion and interpreter of S. Peter,

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 11.

² Col. iv. 10.

and so to connect the book, which bears, and no doubt bears correctly, the name of Mark, with the still greater name of Peter. Some persons may be disposed to say, that even this is a matter of small importance, because that in reality holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that it is indifferent whether the name of Mark or Matthew or Peter be associated with a Gospel, which is fundamentally and essentially the work of the Holy Spirit of God. I can only reply to such persons, that their minds and my own must be either so differently constituted by nature, or so differently formed and modified by education, that it is impossible to argue the point with any hope of a satisfactory result. The phenomena of Holy Scripture seem to me to be as interesting as those of nature; and I think it is not more wise to smother all the peculiarities of God's book under the general formula of inspiration, than it would be to attempt to explain all the wonders that are brought to light by an examination of God's world by the simple assertion that He made it all. If it be true that S. Mark was really the penman of the Gospel which bears his name, but that S. Peter was more substantially the author of it, then I think we may rest assured, that so remarkable a fact in the history of the transmission of the written testimony to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was not intended to be without significance, and that the significance of it will be more apparent as time rolls on, and as the manifold needs of the Church make themselves more and more felt.

But to return to the history of S. Mark. Tradition tells us that S. Mark preached the Gospel in Egypt, and that he was the founder of the Church at Alexandria, which city was in consequence known as the Evangelical See.

“For some time after the day of Pentecost, the Evangelist is said to have preached in Jerusalem and the neighbouring villages, particularly in Bethany. S. Peter however, about the year 37,

appears to have sent him into Egypt; and it would seem that he entered Alexandria in, or towards, the year 40. Here his first convert was one Annianus, or Hananias, a shoemaker by trade, on whom the Evangelist wrought a miracle, and who, in consequence, received him into his house. Having preached the Gospel with great success, and having, in a proportionate degree, irritated the idolatrous inhabitants of the city, than whom no idolaters were more strongly attached to Pagan superstition, S. Mark returned for a season to Jerusalem; first, if we may believe Coptic tradition, having ordained Annianus bishop of the new Church, with three priests and seven deacons as his assistants. This seems to have taken place in the year 44.

“From Palestine, S. Mark accompanied S. Peter to Rome. It was here that, under the direction of the Apostle, he wrote his Gospel, whether, as some will have it, in Latin, or, as it seems more probable, in Greek; for the Egyptian tradition which assigns to it a Coptic original is not for a moment to be received.

“It was, apparently, towards the year 49, that S. Mark returned to Egypt; and there, till the time of his decease, he laboured with great success. And during this period, the first Church in Alexandria is said to have been built.

“The Egyptians, indignant at the progress made by the Gospel, resolved to be avenged on its first preacher. A feast in honour of Serapis, held annually on the twenty-fifth of April, was approaching. Advantage was taken of the circumstance to excite and organize a riot on the preceding day, Saturday, April 24: the rather that the Evangelist had denounced the approaching festivity as idolatrous and impious. Seizing S. Mark, and tying a rope round his neck, they drew him through the principal streets of the city, till the blood gushed from his sides: and, at evening, they threw him into prison, while consulting with respect to his fate. On the same night the sufferer was cheered

by the appearance of an angel, who comforted him with the assurance that his name was in the Book of Life; and shortly afterwards by a vision of the Saviour Himself, who, addressing him by the title of Mark the Evangelist, bade peace be with him. To whom S. Mark replied, 'I yield Thee thanks, O Saviour, that Thou hast counted me worthy to suffer for Thy Name.' On the next day, the Pagans drew the Evangelist around the city, as before, until with the words, *Into Thy hands I commend my spirit*, he went to his rest."¹

The general moral to be drawn from S. Mark's life seems to me to be well given by the portion of Scripture appointed to be read as the Epistle for his day.² *Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. . . . And He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* And so it pleased God to give to S. Mark, who occupies so small a place in the Scripture history of the early propagation of the Gospel, this special grace, that he should be one of the four great lights, which were afterwards to comfort the Church and to enlighten the world. The name of Mark ranks with that of Matthew and John; of the twelve chosen Apostles there are but these two, whose names are as great and illustrious.

And if the Epistle for S. Mark's day furnishes us with the true moral to be drawn from the Evangelist's life, the Collect supplies us with a prayer, appropriate as a conclusion to our consideration of the same. With this Collect I will bring my Introduction to a close, remarking that the prayer for deliverance from the blasts of vain doctrine has a more appropriate connection with S. Mark's Gospel than perhaps the composers of

¹ The preceding account is extracted from Neale's *History of the Church of Alexandria*, vol. i. p. 5.

² Ephes. iv. 7—16.

the Collect had in mind. The blasts of vain doctrine, which have lately blown most severely upon the Church, are those which have had their origin in discussions of the historical character of the Gospels; for protection against such blasts, and for the settlement of the controversies which have been raised, there is no portion of the New Testament which is more valuable than that which is due to S. Mark; the readers of this Commentary will for the most part find it unnecessary to regard his Gospel in this its controversial aspect, but those qualities which make it valuable as a defence of the truth, will also insensibly tell upon the careful reader, and make him feel that he has before him a marvellously bright picture of the earthly sojourn of Him, who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.

O Almighty God, who hast instructed Thy Holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelist S. Mark; give us grace, that, being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of Thy Holy Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE DEANERY, ELY,
December, 1859.

ERRATA.

Page 119, line 8. For *they took Him* read *He took him*.
,, 201. Insert in margin—*Fifth reference to prophecy*.

A COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF S. MARK.

CHAPTER I.

CHAP.
I.
I.

1. *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

This opening of S. Mark's Gospel should be compared with that of S. Matthew's. The contrast is very great, but each as full of truth as the other. S. Matthew introduces us to the generations of Jesus Christ *the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*; S. Mark to the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*. In the one we have the human descent of Him, who was the promised seed in which the whole earth should be blessed; in the other a plain and oracular declaration of the divine Sonship of Him, who is without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. The true harmony of the Gospels is seen in the comparison of such opposite views of Jesus Christ.

The verse compared with the opening of S. Matthew's Gospel.

Is this verse to be regarded in the light of a title or table of contents to the book which follows? It is indeed a worthy title, and the whole contents of the book may certainly be summed up by saying, that

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I.

they constitute *the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. Nevertheless it was perhaps not the intention of S. Mark that his opening sentence should be so construed; he probably wished rather to declare that the beginning of the Gospel, the opening of Christ's Ministry, the manner in which Jesus of Nazareth was declared to be the Messiah, were in conformity with the plan and purposes of God as declared by His prophets, according to the words quoted from the prophetic books in the verses following.

The verse compared with S. Peter's famous confession.

But whatever view we take of the words, they manifestly form a very simple and majestic opening of the history of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is one remark which may be made upon them, and which gives them a very great interest. This Gospel of S. Mark is according to the tradition of antiquity, and (as we shall see hereafter) according also to internal evidence, in reality the Gospel of S. Peter. Let us call to mind then S. Peter's famous confession concerning his Lord. *Whom say ye that I am?* said Christ; Peter answered, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*; and upon that confession our Lord spoke some wonderful words, which S. Peter could never forget. Can we be surprised then that if S. Peter ever composed a Gospel, he should open it with a repetition of the confession which he once made? At all events the coincidence between S. Peter's confession, and what may be called S. Peter's Gospel, is certainly worthy of remark, and to thoughtful persons very full of meaning.

First and second references to prophecy.

2. *As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.* 3. *The voice of one crying in the*

wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.* CHAP. I.

I, 2.

S. Mark does not very frequently refer to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in the history of the Lord Jesus, but in this case he gives us more than one portion of Scripture to connect John the Baptist with the ancient promises concerning the coming of Messiah. And indeed there is a fitness in the prophecies selected by S. Mark to follow his opening announcement of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*, which may possibly be overlooked, but which is nevertheless worthy of attention. If we turn to the passage of Isaiah which he has quoted, as it stands in our Bibles, we shall find that it runs thus: *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*; S. Mark gives it, *make His paths straight*; and the meaning no doubt is the same, but the comparison of the other form of the passage calls to our minds the fact, that *His* paths are the paths of *our God*, and that the preparation of the way in the wilderness spoken of by the prophet follows therefore with propriety upon the announcement of the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

The references to prophecy declare Christ's divinity.

The passage from Malachi, as given by S. Mark, may be compared with its form in the Old Testament with a like result. S. Mark gives it, *Shall prepare Thy way before Thee*; but in the prophet's own book the words are, *Shall prepare the way before Me*, and the passage is followed by some very mysterious language concerning the Lord suddenly coming to His Temple. Now this change from *Me* to *Thee* in a form of words spoken of a divine person is difficult to understand, except by taking into account that the subject of the

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2—5.

prophecy is one who might be spoken of, either as *Jesus Christ*, or as *the Son of God*.

It may be observed that these two prophetic verses are introduced somewhat in the way of a parenthesis; but it is a parenthesis, which a skilful writer, or professed historian, would not have introduced until he had told us something concerning S. John the Baptist; the verses are an explanation of S. John's mission, and a commentary upon it, given before the story of the mission itself has been told. This is in keeping with many other features of this Gospel, and is worthy of note as being precisely what might have been expected from one, who was called, not from the class of the learned, but from his fishing-boat on the lake of Galilee, to be an Apostle and Evangelist.

S. Matt.
iii. 1—5.
S. Luke
iii. 2, 3.

4. *John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*
5. *And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.*

The introduction of John the Baptist into the history.

The expression here rendered, *John did baptize*, is more emphatic in the original. The words imply rather, *John appeared and baptized*, or *John came and baptized*; his introduction into the narrative is thus a little more ceremonious (so to speak) than it is according to the English translation. Either way it is to be noted that the Evangelist gives no account of S. John the Baptist, who he was or what he was; S. Luke, who collected and recorded in his Gospel so many particulars concerning the birth and early portions of the Lord's life, also gives us the history of John's birth; but S. Mark assumes, either that his readers will know who he was, or else that it is not very important that they should know. This

is very characteristic of S. Mark's Gospel; viewed on the human side it may be said to indicate the hand of one who was not a skilful historian, viewed on the divine it shadows forth that which in another Gospel we find declared more distinctly, namely, that the true description of the Baptist was *a man sent from God*.

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I.
4—5.

S. John
i. 6.

These verses which introduce the mission of the Baptist may be rightly connected with the first verse of the chapter. I have already remarked, in commenting upon that verse, that it forms a very fitting title or table of contents to the book of which it is the opening, but that probably S. Mark chiefly intended by it to point out that the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was in accordance with the announcements of the prophets, as quoted in the second and third verses. I now add that the first verse is as intimately connected with the fourth and fifth verses as with the second and third: in the two former S. Mark shews the relation of the Gospel to the prophets, in the two latter and those following he reveals its still more important relation to the ministry of John the Baptist.

This connection will be seen very clearly, if we omit the second and third verses, or regard them as entirely parenthetical; the burden of the passage will then be that the appearance of John in the wilderness, and his preaching of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, was *the beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God*. And indeed the preaching of such a baptism must ever be the beginning of so glorious a Gospel: there can be no remission of sins without repentance; John must come first, Christ afterwards; the sense and knowledge of sin must precede the good news that sin can be pardoned through Jesus Christ.

The preaching of John was the beginning of the Gospel.

CHAP.

I.

6—8.

S. Matt.
iii. 4—11.
S. Luke
iii. 16.

6. *And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7. And preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8. I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*

Character
of S. John
the Baptist
and his
ministry.

S. John the Baptist is a man marked by his appearance and his habits of life wherever we meet with him. He is one of those men whose very dress seems a part of their character. I am not aware that any one of the Evangelists describes S. John by speaking of the qualities of his mind; they do not say that he was a bold man, or a self-denying man, or a strange man; but they mention a few of his deeds and give us the picture of him with which we are all so familiar, the camel's hair and the leathern girdle, and they describe him as living in the wilderness on such wild food as the wilderness afforded. How strange, according to human estimate, that this wild eccentric man should have been spoken of by the Lord Jesus as the 'greatest of those born of woman from the beginning up to that time!

S. Mark's
summary of
S. John's
preaching.

S. Mark tells us nothing concerning John that we do not already know from S. Matthew, and indeed he omits much that S. Matthew has recorded of the details of his ministry. But there is one point worthy of notice in the record which S. Mark has given us. He has described his book in the opening verse of it as *the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*, and he loses no time in shewing us how the prophets of old pointed to the advent of this Son of God, and how S. John the Baptist was the divine messenger to prepare His

way. Now S. John had a message and a baptism of his own, and his preaching was emphatically a preaching of *repentance for the remission of sins*, as S. Mark himself tells us. Hence it is not to be passed over without notice, that when S. Mark proceeds to tell us what S. John said in his preaching, he omits all mention of repentance and produces that part of the preaching which referred to the incomparable glory of Jesus Christ. *There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.* The interest which belonged to S. John's ministry as the means of convincing the people of sin, rousing a generation of spiritual sluggards, persuading them to repent and turn to God, was to a considerable extent confined to the generation to whom he preached; the fact of permanent interest was this, that he testified from the very first that there was a greater than himself to come, that his preaching was only *the beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God.*

9. *And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.* 10. *And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened,¹ and the*

S. Matt.
iii. 13—17.
S. Luke
iii. 21, 22.

¹ The word translated *opened* is different from that used by S. Matthew in the parallel passage: it implies a *rending* or *dividing* of that which had not been divided before: not the *opening of a door*, but the *rending of a garment*. The force of the expression will be seen from the following passages in which it is used: *the veil of the Temple was rent* (S. Matt. xxvii. 51); *the rocks were rent* (ibid.); *let us not rend it* (S. John xix. 24); *the net was not broken* (S. John xxi. 11). It is unnecessary to point out the appropriateness of such a word to that opening of the Heavens, which was effected when the Son of God came into the world.

CHAP. *Spirit, like a dove, descending upon Him.* 11. *And*
 I. *there came a voice from Heaven, saying, Thou art My*
 9—II. *beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

The Gospels
 not complete
 histories.

Note the manner in which Nazareth is here for the first time introduced. S. Mark gives no explanation why our Lord came from Nazareth rather than from any other place; the explanation is found in the Gospel of S. Luke, who tells us that Nazareth was the place where He was brought up, or in that of S. Matthew, who tells us that after the return from Egypt Nazareth was the abode of the holy family. This mode of writing is worthy of remark, because it shews us at the very opening of this Gospel how much it differs in its principle of composition from a complete and orderly history of the Lord's life, and therefore how liable we shall be to fall into mistakes if we treat it as a complete and orderly history, and forget the fragmentary character, which, whatever may be the reason, undoubtedly belongs in a degree to each one of the Gospels.

It is worth observing also, that S. Mark describes Nazareth as *Nazareth of Galilee*; now there was no other Nazareth, and therefore the description might appear unnecessary; and so indeed it was for S. Matthew, but this Gospel having been published at Rome might with advantage supply for its readers an explanation concerning Nazareth, which the inhabitants of the Holy Land did not require.

The baptism of Jesus
 testified to
 His divine
 Sonship.

It is of more importance however to remark the manner, in which the wonderful event recorded in these verses tends to the setting forth of the great truth with which the Gospel opens. Even the omission of the conversation between our Lord and S. John before the baptism assists towards this end; *suffer it to be*

so now, said our Lord to the Baptist who shrank from baptizing Him, *for so it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*; these words which introduce the thought of the present humiliation of the Son of God, of His doing things now which did not belong to His highest nature, are omitted by S. Mark, and we have the simple picture of the opening of the Heavens, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the testimony to the divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus. *Thou art My beloved Son*, said the voice, speaking according to S. Mark to the Saviour Himself; the voice came however not for His sake, but for ours, as He Himself declared on another occasion; it preached to the hearers, and through them to us, the great truth upon which the Church is founded, the reconciliation of God and man through the eternal and well-beloved Son.

12. *And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.*

The word by which S. Mark connects the Temptation in the wilderness with the Baptism is stronger, or rather closer, than that used by S. Matthew. S. Matthew says *then*, S. Mark uses the word *immediately*;¹ and the effect of the word is to shew the intimate union between two events, which to a careless reader might appear as much contrasted as any two events could be. Indeed it would have been difficult for any one to anticipate that the immediate result of being declared

CHAP.

I.

9—12.

S. Matt.
iv. 1.
S. Luke
iv. 1.

Connection
of the
Baptism and
Temptation.

¹ The frequent use of the Greek word of which this is a translation is one of the characteristics of S. Mark's style. It occurs eight times in this first chapter, and (I believe) as many as thirty-nine times in the course of the Gospel. Its very frequent repetition is disguised in the English version by the use of equivalent terms, as *straightway*, *forthwith*, *anon*.

CHAP. the Son of God would be an exile into the wilderness
I. and a terrible spiritual struggle while there.
12, 13.

If however we observe that it was *the Spirit* that declared the Lord's glorious Sonship, and that it was the same Spirit which immediately drove Him into the wilderness, we may learn the power of the Spirit's operations, whether the effect of them be to do honour to the sons of God or to bring pain and trouble upon them: in either case there can be no delay, and it may be added that in either case the result is to give honour to Almighty God: when Jesus was declared to be the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased, then God was glorified; and when Jesus was driven into the wilderness and brought into conflict with Satan and proved victorious, then God was glorified too.

Perhaps also the *immediately* of S. Mark may express the readiness with which the Lord performed His Father's will. No hanging back from duty, however painful: till thirty years of age Jesus remained passive, the fire might have burned within Him, but it was His duty to refrain Himself: now the baptism with the Spirit had publicly consigned Him as the Messiah, and therefore *immediately* He commenced His work, entering upon that conflict which was the type of His whole conflict with evil, and obtaining that victory which was the foretaste of His entire conquest of all that opposes itself to the will of God.

13. *And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.*

S. Matt.
iv. 11.
S. Luke
iv. 2.

Peculiarities of
S. Mark's
account of
the Temptation.

The contrast between this very compressed account of the Lord's temptation and the much fuller one given both by S. Matthew and S. Luke can hardly fail to

attract the attention of the reader of the Gospels. It is impossible to decide and useless to speculate upon the reasons, which led S. Mark to give so brief a history of so important a passage in the Lord's life; but we may note the fact as at least an indication of the independence of the Evangelists, and we may observe that S. Mark's mention of the temptation shews, that, although for some reason he narrated it scantily, he felt its overwhelming importance as an essential part of the Lord's ministry.

We may be thankful also that we have the more detailed histories of S. Matthew and S. Luke. How difficult it must have been to have imagined S. Mark's meaning, if we had simply had his words left to us, *tempted of Satan!* how dangerous might have been the speculations fastened upon the words, and how impossible for any one to have arrived at the truth!

Notwithstanding the brevity of S. Mark's account however, he has inserted something which the other Evangelists have omitted. He says that our Lord was *with the wild beasts*, which some have interpreted fancifully as implying that the fierce creatures were not fierce to Him,¹ that the picture which poets have drawn of the peace of Paradise was realized during the Lord's presence amongst His wild creatures. The real intention probably is to mark the extreme desolation and wildness of the scene of the Lord's temptation,

¹ So Milton, (*Par. R.* Bk. i. 309.)

..... hunger'd then at last
Among wild beasts: they at His sight grew mild,
Nor sleeping Him nor waking harm'd; His walk
The fiery serpent fled and noxious worm,
The lion and fierce tiger glared aloof.

CHAP.

I.

13—15.

to remind us that it was to Him, as to ourselves, painful to be driven from the haunts of our fellow-men and to be compelled to hunger in utter solitude with only wild beasts and creeping things for companions. And the mention of the wild beasts stands in beautiful contrast with that of the ministering angels; the wild beasts were there, but there were angels too; and when the struggle with Satan was over, these blessed creatures sustained the fainting nature which Christ had been pleased to assume; this was their chief ministration, but it may be that S. Mark intends to express that throughout the whole forty days these unseen guardians were there, watching the beloved Son, and ready to preserve Him from harm.¹

S. Matt.
iv. 12—17.

14. *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,*² 15. *And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

The preaching of
Christ according to
S. Mark.

S. Matthew tells us that *Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand;* S. Mark gives the preaching of the Lord somewhat more fully, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.* The two additions which S. Mark makes are both of them important and may each receive a few words of comment.

¹ Lightfoot observes that “forty days He was tempted by Satan invisibly, and Angels ministered to Him visibly. Satan at last put on the appearance of an Angel of light, and pretending to wait on Him, as the rest also did, hid his hook of temptation the more artificially.” A fanciful view, but rather a striking one.

² Observe that S. Mark here speaks of the imprisonment of John as a circumstance well known; the full account of the imprisonment is given afterwards in Chap. vi.

The time is fulfilled. Then the coming of the kingdom of Heaven was all in accordance with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. This we might have concluded for ourselves from our general knowledge of the ways and the character of God; but we are perhaps apt to forget, when we consider the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, that this was the point to which all previous dealings of God with mankind pointed, and to which therefore all previous history tended. All creation had been groaning and travailling in pain, and this was the great birth in which the labour was to end. It was a glorious belief which the Jewish Church of old was permitted to enjoy, that the kingdom of God was coming; holy men were able to support their souls, in the midst of much evil and much that seemed to be against them and against all good, by the persuasion that evil was not to gain the day, but that God would at length assert His sovereignty, that is, would cause His kingdom to come; and so completely was this the life of the ancient Church, that no prayer was deemed complete which did not contain a longing petition for the coming of the kingdom of God. Very musical therefore to the hearts of waiting saints would be the words of our Lord, *The time is fulfilled; the night is past; the day has broken; the kingdom, of which you have so long heard, is now at hand.*

Repent ye, and believe the gospel. So S. Mark reports the Lord's preaching; not merely the repentance mentioned by S. Matthew, but faith in the Gospel added. And the point chiefly notable is this, that the result of repentance should be thus distinctly represented as belief in a Gospel, that is, the hearty reception

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I.

14, 15.

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I.

14—20.

of a message, not of wrath and vengeance, at least not of these primarily, but emphatically of love. *Repent*, says our Saviour,—and what? Hope for the best? tremble lest your repentance should be of no avail? no—but, believe that God has sent His beloved Son into the world, and by Him asserted His sovereignty, and claimed you as His children, and adopted you as His sons!

S. Matt.
iv. 18—22.

16. *Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.* 17. *And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.* 18. *And straightway¹ they forsook their nets, and followed Him.* 19. *And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.* 20. *And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him.*

The call of
Peter,
Andrew,
James, and
John.

This passage agrees almost exactly with the parallel passage in S. Matthew's Gospel; so exactly, that any one who places them side by side can have no doubt in his mind as to the fact of their being originally the same account, certain unimportant alterations having been introduced by S. Matthew.

Nevertheless some remarks may be made upon the passage as it occurs in this Gospel. It will be observed that we here see S. Peter for the first time appearing as the narrator of what he saw himself; the Simon whom the Lord saw as He walked by the sea of Galilee was probably (as before remarked) no other than the

¹ *Straightway.* Happy are they who without delay follow Him.
—BENGEL.

actual author of this Gospel; and if we bear this in mind we can understand why, passing over all other intermediate events, passing over even those interviews which we know from S. John that S. Peter had had with Christ, he should come at once to the call which he received to leave his fishing-nets and follow Jesus. This was the great event in his own spiritual history, and in recording for the benefit of himself and of his fellows an account of the Lord's early ministry this would stand out beyond all other events as one to be written in letters of gold. Nor was it only to S. Peter and those called with him that this walk of Jesus by the sea of Galilee was a notable event; it was the beginning of the Church of Christ, the primary ordination held by the great Bishop of souls of those who should preach His Gospel to the world. Such are the ways of God; so apparently simple are the means by which the greatest results are brought about: a poor man known as the son of a carpenter is walking by a lake, there are two boats upon it, and some poor fishermen in them, and this is the first scene in that great drama which was to occupy the world until the end of time; these fishermen are to be more famous than any of the earth's heroes, and are to shake kingdoms, and overturn religions, and produce the deepest and most lasting change in the condition of mankind that had been witnessed since the creation of the human race.

Observe before leaving the passage the minuteness of the description, as indicative of the account having come from an eye-witness. The particular mode of fishing, by means of what we should call perhaps a *cast-net*, is mentioned in the sixteenth verse; the occupation of the sons of Zebedee, *mending their nets*, is given

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I.

16—20.

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16—22.

in the nineteenth; and in the twentieth we have mention of *hired servants* as being in the boat with Zebedee,—a little circumstance this, which would be known to Simon, who was partner with James and John, and which seems to be introduced here for the purpose of shewing that the sons of Zebedee did not leave their father alone when they forsook their nets to follow Christ.

S. Luke
iv. 31, 32.
Compare
S. Matt.
iv. 13.

21. *And they went into Capernaum: and straightway on the Sabbath-day He entered into the synagogue and taught.* 22. *And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes.*

Christ at
Capernaum.

S. Matthew tells us distinctly, that when Jesus heard that John the Baptist was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth came and dwelt at Capernaum. We may infer this choice of Capernaum for a residence from what S. Mark has written, although he has nowhere expressly asserted it. Capernaum has not been mentioned hitherto; and now when it is mentioned, we find our Lord with disciples following Him, and it is *they* who are spoken of as entering into Capernaum. We see here, as in so many other cases, the abrupt character of S. Mark's writing, and the wide difference between it and an ordinary history.

Straightway He entered the synagogue and taught: the word *straightway*¹ may indicate the Lord's zeal for His work: His mission was clear, and admitted of no delay. And perhaps it may be not fanciful to observe the entire absence of all consultation with the Apostles: as in the case of the feeding of the multitude

¹ See note at foot of page 9.

in the wilderness, *He Himself knew what He would do*: He had chosen His disciples, not that He might consult them, but that they might follow Him.

CHAP.

I.

21, 22.

It should be observed also that the language of S. Mark implies, not only zeal in entering upon the work, but persistency in carrying it on. *On the Sabbath day* should rather be *on the Sabbath days*, and implies a habit, a custom, a regular occupation so often as the day of assembly in the synagogue came round. And if it appear strange that a young man, and he having no special outward claim, should be permitted thus to teach in the synagogue, it must be remembered that this was according to the custom of the Jews:¹ and so we find in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles that S. Paul availed himself of the custom continually to preach Jesus Christ.

But though teaching in the synagogue was customary, such teaching as that which the people of Capernaum now heard was anything but customary. They were astonished at what they heard. Sabbath after Sabbath the difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of the Scribes would grow wider and wider to their view: teaching so deep, so practical, so free from all the cobwebs of tradition, resting upon the solemn personal authority of the speaker, and upon an appeal to the consciences

¹ Lightfoot, commenting upon S. Luke iv. 16, writes: "That we may frame the better judgment of this action of our Saviour, let us a little look into the customs of the Synagogue. . . . He that read in the prophets was called *Maphtir*; and was appointed to that office by the Ruler of the Synagogue. . . . It is probable that Christ did at this time offer Himself as a *Maphtir*, one that would read in the prophets, and preach upon what He read; not beforehand appointed to it by the Ruler of the Synagogue, but rather, approved on when He had offered Himself."

CHAP.

I.

21—28.

of the hearers: teaching also supported by a life of piety and charity during the week between Sabbath and Sabbath: never had there been such teaching in Capernaum before; and inasmuch as S. Matthew gives the same verdict concerning it after the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, which S. Mark gives as passed by the people who heard the Lord in the synagogue, I conclude that the words which they have recorded express, not what was said by a few persons on one occasion, but the impression produced upon the minds of the men of Capernaum by the general tenor of the Lord's teaching.

S. Luke
iv. 33—37.

23. *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,* 24. *Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.* 25. *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.* 26. *And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.* 27. *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.* 28. *And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.*

The *first*
miracle re-
corded by
S. Mark.

This is the first miracle recorded by S. Mark. It is one in which our Lord asserted His authority over the unseen powers of darkness, and so in a very especial manner vindicated His divine character. Perhaps it may not be fanciful to observe, that this beginning of miracles bears to the opening of S. Mark's Gospel

the same kind of relation as is borne to the opening of S. Matthew's Gospel by that which in *his* Gospel is the beginning of our Lord's miracles. S. Matthew exhibits Jesus as *the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*, and the first miracle is the healing of leprosy, that disease which occupies so conspicuous a place in Hebrew law and history; and when our Lord performed the miracle, He commanded the leper to go and shew himself to the priests and offer the gifts prescribed by Moses. S. Mark exhibits Jesus as *the Son of God*, and the first miracle which *he* records is one which more than any other brings out that character in its fulness; the Son of God alone can bind Satan in chains.

CHAP.
I.
23—28.

Another point of interest is brought out from the history of this miracle by comparing it with what we read in S. Matthew's Gospel. S. Matthew gives us the words as spoken by the prophets, *He shall be called a Nazarene*, and the question of Nathanael recorded by S. John, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* is sufficient to shew, that the being called a Nazarene chiefly implied being called so in contempt. Is it not therefore very instructive, and also very affecting, to find our blessed Lord first hailed under this name, according to S. Mark's Gospel, by the mouth of an evil spirit? The language is notable, not so much because it proves the hatred of the evil spirits against Christ, which might be taken for granted, as because it indicates the true source from which human hatred of Christ comes. Human beings who adopt the fearful language, *What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth*, take up the true language of devils; *they* have nothing to do with Jesus, but men have everything to do with

Christ
hailed by
demons as
*Jesus of
Nazareth.*

CHAP. Him; devils can have no communion with Christ,
 I. it is death to men to be separated from Him.¹
 23—28.

Note also that the evil spirits, who hailed the Lord as Jesus of Nazareth, nevertheless ended by confessing Him to be the Holy One of God:² and so they also who reject Christ, as the evil spirits rejected Him, will be compelled by His power to confess that character, which they would not confess when constrained by His love.

Before leaving these verses, observe that the people rightly connected the Lord's wonderful works with His wonderful teaching. They said, *What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits.* According to some manuscripts of the Gospel it should be, *This is a new doctrine with authority*, or with power; and this form of the words, though not so probably correct as that which our English Bibles give us, nevertheless brings out clearly the thought, which the words as given by them contain: it was no doubt the *doctrine with authority*, which seized upon the minds of the people; it was not that they

¹ "The presence of the Saviour is the torment of evil spirits."—BEDE.

² S. Augustine remarks: "Peter says, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God*: the devils also say, *We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God*. This is the confession of Peter, this too is the confession of devils: the words are the same, the spirit is different. And how does it appear that Peter said this with the feeling of love? Because the faith of a Christian is a loving faith: that of devils has no love. How has no love? Peter said this, that he might embrace Christ: the devils, that Christ might depart from them. For before they exclaimed, *We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God*, they had said, *What have we to do with Thee? hast Thou come to torment us before the time?* It is one thing to confess Christ, that you may keep Him near you; it is another to confess Christ, that you may drive Him from you."

had got among them a mere magician or wonderworker, but that they had got one among them who could teach them, tell them the things they most wanted to know, and give proof by His works of the authority of His words.

CHAP.

I.

23—31.

29. *And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.* 30. *But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell Him of her.* 31. *And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.*

S. Matt.
viii. 14, 15.
S. Luke
iv. 38, 39.

Second
Miracle.

The *house of Simon and Andrew*, which is mentioned in these verses, is one of which we hear a good deal in S. Mark's Gospel. It was apparently for some time the Lord's home in Capernaum. S. Peter, the real source (as before remarked) of the materials of this Gospel, was able beyond all others to describe what took place within the doors of this house; and accordingly we observe a minuteness of detail in his descriptions, which we might have expected from an eyewitness, and which is lost in S. Matthew and S. Luke. Thus we find in this Gospel the mention of James and John as being members of the party which went into Peter's house from the synagogue; and the house is described as belonging to Peter and Andrew his brother, not to Peter alone, as might have appeared from S. Matthew and S. Luke.

Peter's
house.

These little matters are by no means unworthy of the attention of the student of the Gospels. Even the description of the Lord's treatment of the invalid, *He took her by the hand and lifted her up*, will probably strike him as indicating the narration of one who was

CHAP.

I.

29—31.

present at the scene. Indeed, so graphic is this account, that some, who have desired to injure the authority of the Gospels, have marked this portion of history as one which could not be truly reported by S. Mark, because he was not an eyewitness, as the narrator must manifestly have been. But without any reference to mere evidence of the truth of the history, the reader of the Gospels will be glad to perceive marks which identify S. Peter's hand, and bring him into more familiar acquaintance with that house by the side of the Lake, in which our Lord was pleased to take up His abode.

Contrast
between
the first
miracle and
the second.

Passing to more important considerations, we may note the contrast in character between this second miracle recorded by S. Mark and the first. The first was a public assumption of power over evil spirits; the second is a quite private exercise of power over disease. The first was witnessed by a whole congregation; the second by a few intimate friends. True, the general effect of the two might be the same, namely, to produce faith in Himself; but in the former case this was the great end, in the latter it was only incidental; in the former we read of the amazement of the people at the wonderful work they had seen, in the latter the result is that Peter's wife's mother arose *and ministered unto them*: she went about her household work, and served Him who had healed her: mercy to her, love to S. Peter, pity towards an afflicted family, seem to have been the chief springs of this thoroughly domestic act of mercy.

S. Matt.
viii. 16.
S. Luke
iv. 40, 41.

32. *And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.* 33. *And all the city was gathered*

together at the door. 34. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.

CHAP.

I.

32—34.

We are told that the Lord used to teach in the synagogue *on the Sabbath day*, and on the day of which this was the evening we find that He and His disciples had come out of the synagogue. Putting these two things together, we perceive that it was when the evening of the Sabbath was come that the diseased people were brought to be healed; and hence we understand why those who brought them waited until *the sun did set*.

Observance
of the Sab-
bath.

It may perhaps be worthy of notice, that our Lord did not blame these simple folks for waiting till the Sabbath was past; He did not tell them that they were observing the day superstitiously, and that they would have done better to have brought their sick before. When He did afterwards perform works of mercy on the Sabbath day, and the Pharisees complained that the Sabbath was broken, then He vindicated His own conduct and that of the persons who brought the sick to be healed, and declared the true nature of the Sabbath; but so long as a course of conduct was adopted under the persuasion that it was pleasing to God, although it might possibly argue a narrowness of religious apprehension, the Saviour did not find fault.

All the city was gathered together at the door, says S. Mark; an expression implying the existence of an open space in front of S. Peter's house, to which we shall find allusion made again hereafter, and worthy of note therefore as recovering for us from the dim past a slight peep at the Lord's home in Capernaum. The

The excite-
ment pro-
duced by
the Lord's
ministry.

CHAP. expression is worthy of note also from the impression
 I. which it conveys of the excitement produced in Ca-
 32—34. pernaum by our Lord's early ministry; the very ex-
 aggeration contained in the phrase *all the city* helps
 the impression, and is in keeping with the spirit of
 the whole chapter, which is manifestly intended to give
 a bright and striking though rapid sketch of the effect
 produced in Galilee by the *beginning of the Gospel of
 Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Christ will
 not receive
 testimony
 from devils.

One kind of testimony however Christ would not receive. He would not suffer the demons to speak *because they knew Him*; He did not bridle their tongues for fear of hearing from them words of hatred and contempt and denial of His divine character, but He would not permit them to do that which they would have done, namely, proclaim Him to be *Christ, the Son of God.* It has been suggested that the reason of this was, that the Lord desired that His true character should not be declared to the Pharisees, and that so at present opposition should not be raised against Him; but I am disposed to hold the older opinion to be the better one, namely, that independently of any consideration of consequences He would not permit testimony to be borne to the truth by the agents of the Spirit of lies.¹ Even men may sometimes with their lips confess Christ, and in consequence of the wickedness of their lives, the confession may be an abomination.

S. Luke
 iv. 42—44.

35. *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.* 36. *And Simon and they*

¹ Compare S. Paul's conduct with regard to the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, Acts xvi. 18.

that were with him followed after Him. 37. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. 38. And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

CHAP.

I.

35—39.

The phrase translated *a great while before day* implies that night was not yet passed, that it was therefore still dark. Possibly the Lord availed Himself of the darkness for the purpose of escaping from the importunities of His friends, and from the admiration of the people of Capernaum. Possibly also S. Peter's cottage, containing (as it now apparently did) not only his own family but visitors besides, was not so suitable for the Lord's solemn devotions as the desert place to which He retired.

The Lord's
retirement
for prayer.

Mark this retirement of the Lord from His friends while they and others slept. It shews how earnestly from the beginning of His ministry He watched for our salvation: others might take rest in sleep, but He must watch: zeal for the service of His Father will not let Him rest as others do: He must awake right early, and be doing His Father's business.

Note, again, that the extraordinary popularity which He had attained in Capernaum was no reason with Him why He should remain there. The question was, whether He had done the work of His Father as it required to be done; and if so, He would not remain for the purpose of basking in the sunshine of friendship and kindness. *Let us go and preach in the next towns also, for therefore came I forth*—the Gospel is not for Capernaum only, but for the world; already the Catholic character of the Church is exhibited, even in this mere embryo of its future

CHAP. I.
35—39. self; and the untiring effort necessary for the purpose of building up that Church is already typified by the conduct of its Founder.

Note, once more, that great fact which S. Mark alone has recorded for us, namely, that Jesus did not retire to a desert place merely for the sake of escaping from Capernaum, but for the purpose of prayer. We are thus let at once into a knowledge of the Lord's *habit* of devotion: that which He did now, He did no doubt continually; this communion with His Father in solitary places was that, which enabled Him to do His Father's work so constantly and so vigorously in public. Some have stumbled at the Saviour's habit of prayer, as though it derogated from His divine character that He should make petitions to God: they have explained it by saying, that He prayed not from want, but for example's sake: but away with such explanations: let us embrace the mystery, let us not care to explain it; and let us say, as we may say without passing the bounds of truth and without detracting an iota from our Saviour's glory, that being perfect man He did that which perfect man ever ought to do, namely, find His chief joy and His chief source of support in communion with His Father in Heaven.

S. Matt.
viii. 2--4.
S. Luke
v. 12--16.

*Third
miracle.*

40. *And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.* 41. *And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.* 42. *And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.* 43. *And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;* 44. *And saith unto him, See thou say*

nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter.

CHAP.
I.
40—45.

This is one of the miracles which is recorded by all three of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. S. Matthew gives it peculiar prominence by making it the first of the Lord's miracles which he records, and there are indeed features in the miracle which make it worthy of the prominence assigned it: in this place however I shall lay stress, not upon the general facts of the miracle, but rather upon those which S. Mark has given in addition to those found in S. Matthew.

S. Mark and S. Matthew both tell us, that the Lord gave the healed leper strict orders not to tell any man what had been done, but S. Mark adds that the man disobeyed the command; and we see from the result of his disobedience what the reason for the command was. Jesus could no more openly enter into the city: not apparently now from fear of persecution, but because of the extreme excitement which His presence occasioned: and, knowing best what would tend to the furtherance of the gospel, He gave in certain cases an injunction of secrecy concerning His mighty works; beyond doubt a temporary injunction only, and one which is worthy of notice as suggesting to us that the Lord did not work miracles entirely for the purpose of what we call *evidence*, but that sometimes the contemplated end could be effected, though the miracles were kept as secret as possible.

Disobedi-
ence of the
healed leper
to the
Lord's com-
mand.

CHAP.

I.

40—45.

The question may rise in our minds,—at all events it is a curious question,—was this healed leper to blame for setting at nought the Lord's command? The answer is perhaps this, that he would in this, as in all other things, have done well to obey completely; at the same time it is impossible not to believe, that the act of disobedience was one which Christ would easily pardon, seeing that it arose from love to Himself and zeal for His honour. The case of those who in our own days are led to do things, of which Christian prudence cannot approve, is nearly parallel; they do what is not right, but yet it may be easily believed that their fault is in some cases more easily pardoned, than the coldness and apathy of those who undertake to condemn them.

Jesus did not entirely abstain from entering the city: He still entered it occasionally (as it were) by stealth: but His home was the wilderness, and there, as S. Luke tells us, He *prayed*: there too the people sought Him, coming to Him from every quarter. What a striking picture of the early portion of the Lord's ministry, and what a contrast to that life of contempt and sorrow upon which He was now entering!

CHAPTER II.

CHAP.
II.

1-4.

1. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house.*

2. *And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them.* 3. *And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.* 4. *And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.*

S. Matt.
ix. 1, 2.
S. Luke
v. 17-19.

S. Mark's language implies that our Lord entered Capernaum secretly, perhaps by night. But the news of His being in the house, that is, in the house of Peter and Andrew, of which the Evangelist has made mention before, found its way into the city, and immediately a crowd was gathered. The expression used by S. Mark to describe this crowd is in the original very peculiar; he tells us that the space about the door was not sufficient to hold the people, and thereby refers to the fact that S. Peter's house had an open space before it, as we found, though less distinctly, from an expression in the former chapter. And this mode of description, which almost certainly indicates that we are reading the report of an eyewitness, is the more worthy of observation, because we find it in company with other very marked instances of the same style. Thus we observe that

The crowd
about the
door.

See page 23.

CHAP.
II.
1-4.

S. Mark, in describing the manner of bringing the paralytic to be healed, says that he was *borne of four*; a little circumstance which an eyewitness might easily set down, and which hardly any one but an eyewitness would insert. But especially we note S. Mark's careful account of the contrivance, by which the paralytic was brought into the Lord's presence. *They uncovered the roof*, and so let the sick man down in his bed. This description has sometimes been carped at,¹ as though it could not represent the truth; but, independently of the consideration that a person inventing a story would

¹ "The sceptics of a former age," says Mr. Smith, in his work on *the Origin and Connection of the Gospels*, "assuming that the construction of Eastern houses was like the European houses of the present day, tell us that such a proceeding was not only improbable, but must have been destructive to those who were below. Strauss, on the other hand, tells us that such a proceeding was unnecessary, and is at great pains to prove that it was quite as easy to enter an Eastern house by the roof entrance, as by that of the door, and therefore that the bearers, 'regardless of the opening already existing, should uncover the roof, and let down the man through an aperture newly broken, is highly improbable.' Now it is quite true that the access to Eastern houses by the roof entrance is as Strauss has represented it; but he has not mentioned, what probably he did not know, that the horizontal aperture in the flat roof had necessarily a secondary roof or porch over it, to keep out the rain. The aperture may be compared to the cabin hatchway of a ship, and the porch to the companion. The main roof is covered with cement, but, if my memory serves me right, the secondary roof is not unfrequently sloping, and covered with tiles. It is fitted to allow persons in an upright posture to enter; but we can easily conceive that it might not be fitted to admit of a person recumbent on a couch without removing the porch. The details respecting the difficulty of entrance have no necessary connection with the miracle, and are in themselves intrinsically unimportant, for a few minutes might remove the tiles and a few hours replace them; they might therefore be altogether omitted, or only incidentally noticed. S. Matthew, in accordance with his style of narration, has adopted the former plan; S. Luke the latter. If, on the other hand, the original

not be likely gratuitously to throw in particulars which could hamper his narrative, it is not difficult to shew, by reference to the construction of Eastern houses, that the process described by S. Mark is a very conceivable one indeed.

Some interpreters have given a spiritual interpretation to the four bearers of this paralytic. They have seen in them a figure of the four Evangelists, whose office it is to bring sinners to Christ¹; and some have seen in them a type of the four cardinal virtues, which though they cannot heal men themselves can yet bring them into the way of healing. These are pretty fancies, and perhaps not unprofitable; in the present age we should do well to regard as more important the evidence

author of the second Gospel was not only present, but it was in his own house that the events took place, we can easily understand why he should have related such a circumstance."

Lightfoot observes: Here I recollect the phrase, *The way of the roof*. When R. Honna was dead, his bier could not be carried out through the door, the door being too strait. Therefore they thought good to draw it out and let it down through the roof, or through the way of the roof.

¹ "I am paralytic, since the powers of my soul are without motion or operation towards anything that is good; but if I shall be carried by the four Evangelists, and brought by them unto the Lord, then shall I hear Him say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*." (Theophylact, quoted by Mr. Ford.)

In one of the Allegories attributed to Hugo de S. Victor the following view is given of the whole history: "The house in which Jesus was entertained stands for the Holy Scripture. The crowd who would not let the paralytic be introduced sets forth the multitude of empty thoughts which hide the sight of God from the sinful soul. The roof is uncovered when the sublime and mystical sense of Scripture is laid open. Here the paralytic is brought into the presence of Jesus: there his sin is forgiven him, He is called *Son*, and commanded to take up his bed and walk; for when a man truly comes to the knowledge of God, God heals him by His grace from all that he has done amiss, and calls him a son by adoption, and commands him to take up his bed by subduing the flesh and to walk by means of good works."

CHAP.

II.

1—12.

S. Matt.
ix. 2—8.
S. Luke
v. 20—26.

Fourth
miracle.

which is afforded by such a trifling circumstance of the hand of an eyewitness in the report of a miracle.

5. *When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.* 6. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,* 7. *Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?* 8. *And immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit¹ that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?* 9. *Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?* 10. *But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,)* 11. *I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.* 12. *And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.*

The faith
of the
bearers.

Jesus saw their faith—it was precisely the kind of faith which God loves, a faith which could be *seen*, because it was a faith which shewed itself in works. Even the pulling of tiles from the roof of a house may be a holy action, and replete with blessing; the commonest acts may be sanctified by the spirit which dictates them. But what had the faith of these bearers to do with the spirit of the paralytic? did he participate

¹ "The prophets knew things in the Spirit of God, not in their own; Christ in His own Spirit, which was omniscient and divine. But the Holy Spirit is not called the Spirit of Christ before the great day of Pentecost. It remains therefore that we must understand the Spirit of Jesus to imply the divine nature which dwelt within Him."—BENGEL.

CHAP.

II.

5—12.

in the act of faith? was it at his earnest entreaty that he was carried into the presence of the Lord? Probably this was so: but still the phrase *their faith* is sufficient to prove, that it was not only the faith of the paralytic to which Jesus looked, but also the faith of those who bore him. Nor is this observation without its value when we consider how essential a portion of our duty it is to bring helpless persons, namely children, to Christ, who can shew no faith of their own, and whom nevertheless we trust that (in virtue of the faith of those who bring them) God will address as His sons.

This name of *son* might be merely a term of kindness as addressed by Christ to the paralytic: S. Luke seems so to have considered it, for he gives us the word *man* instead: but possibly the name may have deeper meaning, and may imply that the man became a son *because* his sins were forgiven; for forgiveness is ever the ground of adoption, and it is under the sense of free pardon and grace that we are able to cry *Abba, Father!*

The title
of *Son*.

The history of this miracle as given by S. Mark is almost precisely the same as that given by S. Matthew; wherever one is fuller than the other, it is that of S. Mark. One slight difference between them, which consists merely in the order of a few words, and may be accidental, I will just notice because it suggests a useful train of thought. S. Matthew has the words, *the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins*: the words stand in S. Mark, *hath power to forgive sins on earth*: the former phrase might mean that Christ could give a promise on earth, which should be ratified in Heaven at the last day; the latter would rather imply the more blessed truth, that forgiveness of sins is possible even now. What do we mean by forgiveness

Christ for-
gives sins
on earth.

CHAP.
II.
5—15.

of sins on earth? do we think merely of an escape from final punishment? There is a temptation to do so; but this is a very imperfect view of forgiveness; forgiveness may be perfect on earth, and the spiritual blessings of adoption into God's family may be as real in this world, as they ever can be in the world to come. Moreover if sins be not forgiven on earth, how shall they ever be forgiven?

S. Matt.
ix. 9, 10.
S. Luke
v. 27—29.

13. *And He went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them.* 14. *And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphæus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* 15. *And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for they were many, and they followed Him.*

The history
of the call of
S. Matthew
compared
with that
given by
S. Matthew
himself.

This passage agrees very nearly with the parallel place of S. Matthew¹; so nearly in fact that it may be argued with much probability that the latter has been taken from the same original as the former; and some have ventured to rest upon this foundation doubts concerning the authenticity of S. Matthew's Gospel. But even if it should be granted that S. Matthew wrote the account of his conversion in his own Gospel in the manner in which S. Peter had recorded it, the admission involves nothing very strange: many things are far more improbable than that in a matter so nearly concerning himself the Evangelist should prefer adopting

¹ The chief difference is the substitution of the name of Matthew for Levi, a change which (as Neander observes) is sufficiently accounted for if we suppose that the person in question was designated in the one case by his name, and in the other by his surname.

a memoir already current amongst the disciples, and introducing into it such modifications as his own modesty suggested, to composing an entirely new history himself. And this may be said confidently, that all the changes which have been made are such as accord with the belief that they were made by S. Matthew's own hand.

CHAP.

II.

13—15.

A remark suggests itself upon the phrase *as He passed by*. The expression might seem to imply that the passing by was quite accidental, as we should call it; that Jesus did not go to look for S. Matthew, (or Levi as he is here called,) because He had heard this or that concerning him, but that He happened to see him in his toll-house as He passed from the sea-side homewards. Doubtless the Lord knew what manner of man it was that He was calling, and how valuable a minister of His Gospel He was ordaining; but still His conduct may be noted as typical of the manner, in which many great events are brought about by God. Things seem to be accidental, but there is a divine hand at work beneath. Jesus passed by and called this publican, who probably seemed not to be different from other publicans, and the result of His passing by has been the illumination of the world with the light of the first of the four Gospels.

Looking to smaller matters we may observe, that the title *son of Alphæus* as descriptive of Levi is omitted by S. Luke. The Alphæus referred to was probably some one well known in Capernaum, and therefore was likely to be mentioned by S. Peter, himself familiar with that place, and perhaps writing there: S. Luke might very well omit the name, and the rather so for fear of creating a confusion with Alphæus the father of James. Observe also the little note at the end of

CHAP.
II.
11—20.

the fifteenth verse, explanatory of the fact of the disciples of Jesus sitting at meat in Levi's house as well as Himself: *they were many, and they followed Him*; they all formed one party; and if the Master were asked to a feast, it was necessary to ask the disciples too.

S. Matt.
ix. 11—15.
S. Luke
v. 30—35.

16. *And when the Scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?* 17. *When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* 18. *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come, and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?* 19. *And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.* 20. *But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.*¹

Sinners
eating with
Christ.

Observe the emphasis given to the phrase *publicans and sinners*: it occurs three times, twice in the sixteenth verse and once in that preceding. It may be a question what is meant in such a connection by the term *sinners*: and the answer may probably be, that the phrase is not intended to point to any special and definite kind of sinfulness, but only to describe a class of persons who in the religious language of the Jews would be denoted by that term. Thus we find S. Paul, in writing to the Romans, speaking of

¹ Note this verse as containing the first allusion to the Lord's passion.

himself and his countrymen as being *Jews and not sinners of the Gentiles*; where the phrase *sinners of the Gentiles* evidently implies merely the fact of Gentilism, which ever involved to the Jewish mind the thought of that impurity which practically belonged to the large majority of the Gentile world. In S. Mark's use of the term there is no reference to Gentiles, for they would not be present at the feast, but rather to those Jews who were looked upon as being as bad as Gentiles; according to the phrase which our Lord used, when, speaking of an obstinate offender in the Church, He said, *let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican*. The notion is much the same when we use the phrase, "the *heathen* population of our large towns," intending thereby to express that there are people in such towns living in as great ignorance of God as the inhabitants of heathen countries themselves.

This being the case, we need not be surprised that our Lord met with so much honour from those who are described as *sinners*. Sin against light, obstinate continuance in ungodly ways in spite of warning, very much tend to keep men away from God: but if there be a people sitting in darkness because Priests and Levites and those who have greater advantages look upon them as not worth enlightening, then when the Gospel of Christ is preached we cannot wonder at its being received with joy and leading many to repentance. It was persons like these, to whom beyond others the Lord declared Himself sent, because beyond others they were helpless in themselves.

In the discussion concerning fasting there is nothing of importance which we have not already found in the Gospel of S. Matthew. It may however be noted that

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II.
16—22.

S. Mark states what S. Matthew takes for granted, namely, that the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: here we may see perhaps a little indication of this Gospel having been published at a distance from Palestine, and not specially for the use of Jewish Christians. And we may note also that here, as in so many other cases, S. Mark's account is more complete than that given by any other Evangelist.

S. Matt.
ix. 16, 17.
S. Luke
v. 36—38.

21. *No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.* 22. *And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.*

Importance
and difficulty
of this pas-
sage.

This difficult passage, as here reported, is almost identical with the parallel place of S. Matthew. There are however slight differences, indicating that one is not a mere copy of the other; they may very well be supposed to be independent versions of the same original words, used by the Lord Himself, and recorded by one of those who heard them.

Hence there is nothing to be remarked upon the passage here, which might not have been remarked when it occurred in S. Matthew; but the fact of the words having been preserved not only by these two Evangelists but by S. Luke as well, may be noted as indicating that they were certainly considered by the Apostles as throwing much light upon the character of the Ministry of their Lord. And this remark strengthens the view taken in my commentary upon S. Matthew, in which I observed¹ that in addition to giving a lesson

¹ See *Commentary on S. Matthew*, page 164.

to His own immediate disciples concerning fasting, the Lord probably intended to point out how thoroughly different in principle His own teaching was from any which had been given to the world before, above all different from that formal empty system, to which the Scribes and Pharisees had accustomed the minds of the Jews.

With regard to the substance of the Lord's parable the notion seems to be, that the *new* or rather the *coarse unfinished* cloth would not effectually mend the rent, because being altogether unyielding it would tear the old wherever the two were joined; and perhaps also considerable importance should be attached to the addition given by S. Luke, that *the new agreeth not with the old*, that there is want of harmony as well as danger of tearing. The allusion to the old bottles is much easier, and is understood at once by reference to the custom of using skins for bottles prevalent in the East and other parts of the world: and we may find a good illustration in the history preserved in Joshua ix, where we read of the inhabitants of Gibeon, *who did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine-bottles, old, and rent and bound up*: and we read also that when they came to Joshua they said amongst other things, *these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and behold they be rent*. It is easy to understand that skins old and dry would be incapable of bearing the fermentation of new wine.

23. *And it came to pass, that He went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.* 24. *And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the*

S. Matt.
xii. 1—8.
S. Luke
vi. 1—5.

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II.
23—28.

*Sabbath-day that which is not lawful? 25. And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? 26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to those which were with him?*¹ 27. And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: 28. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

¹ "There is a difficulty in the words, *the days of Abiathar the High Priest*. In I. Sam. xxi. from which this account is taken, *Ahimelech*, not *Abiathar*, is the high priest. There is however considerable confusion in the names about this part of the history: Ahimelech himself is called Abiah, I. Sam. xiv. 3; and whereas (I. Sam. xxii. 20) Ahimelech has a son Abiathar, in II. Sam. viii. 17 Ahimelech is *the son of Abiathar*, and in I. Chron. xviii. 16, Ahimelech. Amidst this variation we can hardly undertake to explain the difficulty in the text."—ALFORD. Lightfoot has this note: "It is well enough known what is here said in defence of the purity of the text: namely, that *Ahimelech* the father was called *Abiathar*, and *Abiathar* the son was called also *Ahimelech*. But I suppose that something more was propounded by our Saviour in these words. For it was common to the Jews, under *Abiathar*, to understand the *Urim* and *Thummim*. Nor without good reason, when it appears, that under the father and the son, both of that name, the mention of inquiring by *Urim* and *Thummim* is more frequent than it is ever anywhere else; and after Abiathar the son there is scarcely mention of it at all. Christ therefore very properly adds, *in the days of Abiathar the High Priest*, therein speaking according to a very received opinion in the nation: as though He had said, David eat the shew-bread given him by the High Priest, who had the oracle by *Urim* and *Thummim* present with him, and who acted by divine direction."

Dr. Wordsworth remarks that although S. Mark speaks of the event having happened in the days of Abiathar, his language "rather suggests that he was *not* the High Priest then, and the reference is made to him as a celebrated High Priest; and indeed he is mentioned in the next chapter of the history, as the High Priest who followed David with the *Urim* and *Thummim*, when he was persecuted by Saul."

Our Lord's manner of dealing with the Sabbath-day was not new, as He Himself explained; He was not destroying, but in the best sense fulfilling, when He brought out the true meaning and spirit of institutions which were in danger of being shrivelled up into mere formalisms. We have a very striking instance of the same solution of the Sabbath question being arrived at under the pressure of outward circumstances in the history of the Maccabees. We read that certain of the Jews perished because *war was made against them on the Sabbath-day*, and they would not commit a breach of the Sabbath by defending themselves; and then further we read that Matthias and his friends said, *If we all do as our brethren have done, and fight not for our lives and laws against the heathen, they will now quickly root us out of the earth. At that time therefore they decreed, saying, Whosoever shall come to make battle with us on the Sabbath-day, we will fight against him; neither will we die all, as our brethren that were murdered in the secret places.* Actual contact with hard facts thus frequently compels men to wiser conclusions than Scribes and Pharisees can arrive at in their closets.

S. Mark records this controversy concerning the Sabbath-day much in the same manner as S. Matthew, but there is an addition which requires notice. This addition consists in the assertion of a general principle concerning the Sabbath, which has often been quoted since, not only with regard to Sabbatical observances but also with regard to religious institutions in general. *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.* The former clause contains the true principle of all religious observances, the latter the counterfeit principle of formalism. Doubtless the principle laid down

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II.

23—28.

The Sabbath-day.

1 Maccabees
ii.

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II.
23—28.

by Christ applies equally to His own Sabbath, or the Lord's day; that day too has been made for man, and not man for it; and therefore, although it is emphatically the *Lord's* day and not *man's* day, and the worship of the Lord is one great end to which it is to be devoted, still in considering how it should be observed, the circumstances and wants of those for whose benefit it was consecrated must be one of the chief things borne in mind.

The Son of
Man Lord of
the Sabbath.

S. Matthew and S. Luke record the Lord's assertion that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, but S. Mark gives a peculiar emphasis to the assertion by connecting it as a consequence with the general principles upon which I have been commenting. The Sabbath was made for *man*, therefore the Son of *Man* is Lord of the Sabbath: I apprehend that the consequence here implied is not only true, but also full of light upon the relation in which the Lord stands to ourselves: He is the head of the race, and therefore whatever was made for the race was made for Him, and He has a right to speak concerning it with authority on the part of His brethren. This is only one example of that blessed truth which runs throughout the whole New Testament and which constitutes the very root of the Gospel, namely, that Christ by assuming our nature is so identified with our race that He can become for us a priest, a sacrifice, a mediator, an advocate.

CHAPTER III.

CHAP.
III.
1—5.

1. *And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.* 2. *And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day; that they might accuse Him.* 3. *And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.* 4. *And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.* 5. *And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.*

S. Matt.
xii. 9—13.
S. Luke
vi. 6—10.
Fifth
miracle.

This miracle which is recorded by S. Matthew, S. Mark; and S. Luke seems to have been wrought in the synagogue of Capernaum, but not upon the same day as that on which the disciples went through the corn-fields. S. Mark's account might possibly suggest to some readers the contrary, but the words which he uses do not really imply anything of the kind, and indeed S. Luke expressly speaks of this miracle as having been performed upon *another Sabbath*. The story is however closely connected with that of the corn-fields, and forms another lesson upon one of the great points of dispute between our Lord and the Pharisees, namely, the character of the Sabbath-day. As usual it is told by S. Mark with more minuteness than by S. Matthew.

Another
lesson on the
Sabbath.

CHAP.

III.

1—5.

S. Mark tells us that they watched Jesus, whether He would heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath-day; and this leads to the suspicion that the whole thing was a trap; yet the man might have been there honestly as one of the worshippers, and the fact that he was made one of the monuments of the Lord's healing power would incline us to think that this was so. Anyhow our Lord perceived the spirit of those who were watching Him and met it boldly. First He calls to the man to *stand forth*, or rather to *rise up in the midst*, that is, in the midst of the congregation; the Lord will give as public a lesson as possible upon the nature of the Sabbath and the true mode of keeping it; the man with the withered hand must therefore stand in the midst, as a preacher to his brethren. Then He reasons with the people on the folly of their views concerning the Sabbath, and with such effect that they could not answer: *they held their peace*: as is not unfrequently the case, they adhered to their views very boldly and obstinately, but when a few simple questions were put to them they had nothing to say.

Lastly we read that the Lord *looked on them with anger, being grieved¹ for the hardness of their hearts*. The expression here used is worthy of notice: *anger* and *grief*, the Lord's heart experienced both; the grief could not be without anger, and the anger without the grief would have been merely the wrath of man;

¹ The word used by S. Mark, and which occurs only in this place throughout the New Testament, expresses something more than *grief*, but unfortunately does not admit of being so translated. It implies *sympathetic* grief, grieving for the sake of those whose hearts were hard, sorrowing *with* them while His righteous anger was excited *against* them.

God is not angry as men are angry, and because His anger is founded upon grief it is easily changed into pity.

CHAP.
III.
5—12.

6. *And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.* 7. *But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judæa,* 8. *And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him.*¹ 9. *And He spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him.* 10. *For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.* 11. *And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.* 12. *And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known.*

S. Matt.
xii. 14—16.

S. Mark mentions the combination of the Pharisees with the Herodians at a much earlier period of the history than S. Matthew. The reason of the combination is not clear, and probably the discovery of it requires a fuller knowledge of the facts of the case than we possess: if however these Herodians, of whom we know so little, were the adherents of Herod, in fact a political not a religious party, it is conceivable that the Pharisees might have awakened their jealousy by representing the Lord as one, whose career was likely to be troublesome to their patron and dangerous to his throne; just

The combination of the Pharisees with the Herodians.

¹ "The repetition of *a great multitude* is the report of one who saw the numbers from Tyre and Sidon coming and going."—ALFORD.

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III.
6—12.

as in a subsequent part of the history we find the Chief Priests accusing Jesus before Pilate as a man who stirred up sedition against Cæsar. Much experience has shewn that religious animosity and secular jealousy very easily join in alliance against earnest piety.

But the Lord's time was not yet come, and therefore He withdrew Himself to the sea. The account of His life during this retreat is very compressed, but much fuller in S. Mark than in S. Matthew; I apprehend that the retreat was of some duration; in order to be effectual it would almost necessarily be so, for when the Pharisees had once taken counsel with the Herodians to destroy Him, they would not be likely to desist from their endeavours until the excitement produced by His preaching and miracles had to a very great extent subsided. It may be observed also, that the fact of multitudes coming to Him from all parts seems in like manner to point to a retreat of considerable duration: I apprehend that S. Mark does not mean to describe one great multitude as being present at one time, but to tell us that large numbers of people came from time to time to seek out the great prophet in His retreat, some from this place, and some from that. His retreat, though it kept Him safe from His enemies, did not prevent Him from being found of those who earnestly desired to find Him.

The boat
which
waited upon
Christ.

Observe the particularity of S. Mark in mentioning the boat which waited upon Jesus during this period of His retirement; and learn this lesson also, that when we have the work of God in hand we are to descend to the minutest precautions, which are calculated to ensure success. The same lesson is learned on a larger scale from the whole history of this retreat to the wilder-

ness; and in early days of persecution Christian leaders were able to appeal to the conduct of the Lord Himself, in proof of the wisdom and duty of retiring sometimes from threatened danger.

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III.
6—15.

Observe also how in the eleventh verse the unclean spirits are identified with those whom they inhabited. *Unclean spirits fell down*; that is, the bodies in which they dwelt fell down. Learn from this how fearfully our own independence of action, and our very personality, may be sacrificed by submission to the powers of sin.

Unclean
spirits fall-
ing down be-
fore Christ.

13. *And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him.*
14. *And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach,*
15. *And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.*

S. Matt.
x. 1.
S. Luke
vi. 12, 13.

The account of the election and ordination of the twelve Apostles, furnished by this Gospel, suggests several useful reflections.

The election
and ordina-
tion of the
Apostles.

The time had come when it seemed good to our Lord to put His ministry upon what we may venture to call a more organized footing. Hitherto He had had many disciples, and apparently some more particularly attached to His person; and He had intimated to several that He would entrust to them a very important commission, as when He told James and John that He would make them *fishers of men*; but He had not yet ordained a certain number from amongst His disciples, who should be recognized as special companions and ambassadors. This He now did, and the number so chosen was *twelve*, a number evidently having reference to the tribes of Israel and pointing out the first object of their mission.

Two things I chiefly notice in the appointment of

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III.
13—15.

the twelve. In the first place when Jesus went up into the mountain, apparently for the express purpose of this solemn ordination of Bishops and Pastors for His Church, we are told by S. Mark that He *called whom He would, and they came unto Him*. The words are emphatic: there was no discussion of their relative merits amongst the disciples, much less was there any ambitious pressing of their several claims to be chosen: Christ's will was the only guide of election, and they who were called came to Him in obedience to His call. The manner in which He exercised His will may possibly cause us some surprise, when we consider that He not only called a Peter and a John, but also a Judas Iscariot; yet even this calling is not without its lesson, throwing (as it does) a light upon later Church history, and shewing us that we are not to suppose that the Lord has deserted His Church because sometimes a Judas is found in the seat of the Apostles; and the whole transaction may in like manner be thought upon, as teaching us, that the call of Christ, and not any ambition on our own part, is the true title to be one of His Ministers.

The other point which I notice is the fact stated by S. Mark, that the Lord chose twelve disciples *to be with Him*. They were Apostles, but that was not their only office; they were to preach the Gospel and heal sicknesses and cast out devils, but they had another office to perform when employed on no Missionary journey; and that was to comfort and support their Master in His troubles, and supply some of that solace which in virtue of His human nature He condescended to require. And perhaps we may venture to draw this lesson, as applicable to the ministry of the Church in all times, namely,

that they only can be Christ's apostles who are also
 Christ's companions, they only can be successful mis-
 sionaries who love the society of Christ and with
 whom Christ Himself condescends to hold close com-
 munion.

CHAP.
 III.
 13—19.

16. *And Simon He surnamed Peter;* 17. *And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James;*
and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, the sons
of Thunder; 18. *And Andrew, and Philip, and Bar-*
tholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the
son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaan-
ite, 19. *And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him:*
and they went into an house.

S. Matt.
 x. 2—4.
 S. Luke
 vi. 14—16.

The last clause of these verses belongs more naturally
 to the following verse. The account of the twelve
 Apostles ends with *Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed*
Him; and then the history proceeds, *And they went*
into an house, or rather into *the house,* or (as we should
 say) within doors, *and the multitude cometh together again.*
 The house spoken of is probably that of which we have
 already heard much, namely, S. Peter's in Capernaum.

Catalogue
 of Apostles.

The catalogue of Apostles agrees almost precisely
 with that given by S. Matthew;¹ the only difference
 in arrangement being that S. Andrew is put after James
 and John instead of before them, and that S. Matthew
 is placed before S. Thomas. The only addition of im-
 portance is the mention of the surname given by the
 Lord to James and John: *He surnamed them Boanerges,*
which is the Sons of Thunder. We have no record of
 this name being used as an ordinary appellation of these
 two brethren, nor indeed is there any mention of it
 whatever except in this place. Hence the propriety of

The Sons
 of Thunder.

¹ See the commentary and notes on the parallel passage of S. Matthew.

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III.

16—19.

the name becomes a question of some difficulty, and the chief help given in answering it is to be found in that story which S. Luke has recorded of James and John wishing to call down fire from Heaven on a Samaritan village which would not receive Christ. It is very possible, but cannot be proved, that the Lord might have given the name upon this very occasion, and that it never passed into a word of common use amongst the Apostles; as indeed it was not likely to have done, seeing that the use of it in their mouths would imply a censure upon the two brethren, which they were not in a condition to administer.

But whether the name were given upon the occasion referred to or not, it is very probable indeed that it was used by the Lord to express, and at the same time to check, that temper of mind which burst forth in the desire to destroy a village with fire from Heaven. Such a desire could scarcely have shewn itself only once; it indicated a disposition of mind, which, shewing itself once, would too surely shew itself again; and viewed as a monument of this disposition the name *Boanerges* is deeply interesting. S. James was taken away so early that we know very little of his character, but S. John (and probably his brother was something like him) we know better than almost any other saint of the New Testament: the Apostle of love, the dearest friend of Christ, the guardian of the blessed Virgin when her only Son was taken from her, the old man in the assemblies of the Church at Ephesus, who being unable to say more repeated the words, *Little children, love one another*—how could this gentle disciple of Christ ever have deserved the name of a *son of Thunder*? How he gained it, as I have said, is uncertain; but how

he lost it is clear enough, namely, by following Christ and catching the spirit of His most gentle example.

CHAP.

III.

15—21.

20. *And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.* 21. *And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself.*¹

These verses are peculiar to S. Mark, and we perceive in them, as so frequently in other places of this Gospel, the clear indications of the report of an eye-witness. The words bring before our minds very vividly, and all the more so for their extreme simplicity, the scene of the crowd collecting round the house and of the bustle and restlessness inside, which prevented the Lord and His disciples from taking their regular meals.

The Lord
accounted
mad by His
friends.

And now we find our Lord's conduct growing so marked and peculiar that His friends accounted for it by saying that He was beside Himself, and they consequently endeavoured to restrain Him. It may be asked who these persons were, that took this view of His conduct? Our English Version has rendered the Greek phrase by *His friends*, and this is probably the best rendering; soon after we find *His brethren and His mother* coming to Him, and endeavouring to speak to Him; were these the friends referred to? It is inconceivable that the blessed Virgin should have been amongst those who thought Him beside Himself, but it is quite possible that the notion may have been

¹ Some have thought that the concluding words of this verse were spoken of the multitude, as though the Lord's friends wished to save Him from the madness of the multitude; but the better opinion seems to be that the English Version is correct in applying the words to the Lord Himself.

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III.
20—30.

adopted by some of those described under the general title of *brethren*, and the growth of such a notion amongst them would probably give His mother almost as much uneasiness as the fear of His being illused by His enemies: it is not difficult to believe, that she wished to warn Him as much of the mistake of the one as of the malice of the other.

With regard to the conclusion itself, *He is beside Himself*, the first thought that strikes the mind is, how easy and convenient a solution of all difficulties this is! When S. Paul stood before Festus, and had produced a considerable effect upon his mind by his earnest account of himself and his doings, Festus told him he was made mad by much learning. The explanation is ready to hand for every one who cannot understand a teacher of unpleasant doctrines; of course it may sometimes be true, but the remembrance of the way in which it was applied in the case of Christ ought to make us cautious of using it, and warn us that the explanation of apparent folly in a teacher may sometimes be found in the dulness or hardheartedness of those, who come to him professing their desire to be taught.

S. Matt.
xii. 24—32.
S. Luke
xi. 15—20.

22. *And the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils.* 23. *And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?* 24. *And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.* 25. *And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.* 26. *And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.* 27. *No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except*

he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

CHAP.
III.
22—30.

S. Matthew, S. Mark, and S. Luke have all recorded our Lord's solemn speech concerning blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; there are however two or three points peculiar to S. Mark's report which may be worthy of notice.

Blasphemy
against the
Holy Ghost.

S. Matthew and S. Luke connect the charge of being in league with Beelzebub, and the Lord's solemn warning consequent upon the charge, with a miracle which He had just performed upon one possessed; S. Mark omits this miracle; it is perhaps hard to say why, for we might almost have guessed from internal evidence, I mean from the character of the charge made by the Scribes, that there had been some notable work just performed, which had called attention to the Lord's superhuman power and had led unbelievers to attribute it to an evil source. But if S. Mark is less particular in this point, he gives us immediately afterwards a valuable piece of information which is not found in either of the other Evangelists. He tells us that the objection concerning Beelzebub was made by *Scribes which came down from Jerusalem*; and it is not difficult to understand the spirit in which these Scribes would undertake to enlighten the rustic simplicity of the Galileans; it is plain from the whole tenor of S. Mark's history that the Lord's fame had spread widely, and that the people of Galilee were well disposed to admit

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III.
22—30.

His claims, and if the Scribes from Jerusalem denied that He was a teacher sent from God, the Galilæans would reply, How then does He do such miracles? The Scribes undertook to get over this difficulty by their supposition concerning Beelzebub; it was an explanation worthy of men, who, in studying the letter, had lost the whole spirit of religion; plain practical men would have seen that the good fruits of the emancipation of men's bodies and spirits from the powers of evil could never have grown upon such a corrupt tree as the evil one himself.

The expression rendered *eternal damnation* is according to some copies *eternal sin*. Without endeavouring to determine which is the true reading, I cannot but remark that the latter is very strikingly emphatic. Eternal damnation, eternal punishment, eternal death, —call it what you will, it is all expressed by the phrase *eternal sin*; eternal, not (of course) in its commission, but in its consequences, because not wiped out by the blood of Christ.

S. Mark alone adds the explanatory verse, *Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit*: an explanation which it is most important to bear in mind in considering the awful question of sin against the Holy Ghost.¹

S. Matt.
xii. 46—50.
S. Luke
viii. 19—21.

31. *There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him.*

32. *And the multitude sat about Him; and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee.* 33. *And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren?* 34. *And He*

¹ On this subject I venture to refer to the last three sermons in my *Third Series* of Parish Sermons.

looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! 35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.

CHAP.
III.
31—35.

I have remarked in commenting upon the parallel passage in S. Matthew's Gospel, that the attempt here made by the Lord's mother and His brethren to speak to Him while surrounded by the multitude is probably to be connected with the circumstance which has been already related by S. Mark, namely, that some of His friends thought Him mad. When things had come to this point, it cannot be matter of surprise that the blessed Virgin should have had her fears aroused, and that she should have sought to gain speech with her Son. Her motives however must remain in doubt, in consequence of the brief manner in which her visit is touched upon.

Two points of interest arise from S. Mark's narrative. In the first place observe that the whole story is introduced apparently, and I think we may say certainly, for the sake of the lesson which the Lord hung upon it. The sword must now have begun to pierce the mother's soul; if she had an interview with her Son when the crowd was dispersed, it must have been one of a most affecting kind; and in an ordinary biography, a writer who was studying effect, and wished to move the feelings of his readers, would not have lost so good an opportunity of painting a most touching scene; but S. Mark does not even tell us whether Son and mother met; he only records that Christ declared human motherhood and brotherhood to be as nothing in comparison with that spiritual relationship to Himself, which is founded upon the doing of the will of God.

The Lord's
lesson con-
cerning
mothers and
brethren.

CHAP.

III.

31—35.

The Lord's
mother not
mentioned
elsewhere by
S. Mark.

In the second place, observe that this is the only mention which S. Mark makes of the mother of the Lord. Jesus appeared at once in this Gospel as the Son of God of whom the prophets had spoken; His human pedigree was never mentioned; and even at the close of His life, where we read of other women following Him and ministering to Him, and in the case of the crucifixion itself, at which we know from other sources that His mother was present, S. Mark passes her over in silence. The one allusion to a human mother which S. Mark's Gospel contains is therefore one which receives its colour from the Lord's question, *Who is My mother*, and His own answer to that question.

CHAP.

IV.

1, 2.

S. Matt.
xiii. 1—3.
S. Luke
viii. 4.

CHAPTER IV.

1. *And He began again to teach by the sea-side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.* 2. *And He taught them many things by parables.*

The teaching by parables.

We arrive now at a new stage in the history of the Lord's Ministry, namely, that in which He commenced the teaching by parables. Probably some interval of time divides the close of the preceding chapter from the commencement of this, though if the words *the same day* in the parallel place of S. Matthew are to be taken in their strict sense as referring to the day in which the

preceding events occurred, this cannot be. But the account is so manifestly and intentionally fragmentary, the Evangelist passing over all of a private nature consequent upon the visit of the Lord's mother and brethren to proceed with the history of the public ministry, that I cannot help leaning towards the belief that some time elapsed before the Lord adopted this new style of teaching. Hitherto we have heard nothing of opposition and obstinacy on the part of the crowd; it was *the Scribes from Jerusalem* who attributed His works to the power of Satan; the leaven of these Scribes would begin to work; the argument *have any of the rulers believed in Him?* would be brought to bear upon the ignorant multitude, and so the general admiration of the Lord's teaching would begin to subside, and that hardheartedness begin to shew itself, to which He Himself refers as the explanation of His more mysterious mode of teaching.

Yet the Lord's judgment upon the hardheartedness of the Galilæans was tempered with mercy: He still taught them, and in such a manner that they who had ears to hear might hear. There is no relaxation in the efforts which He makes: He still sits as a master in the schools, and expounds, though in a new fashion, the character of His kingdom. S. Jerome observes very beautifully that as the multitude cannot come into the house to Jesus, Jesus goes out to them: He sits by the side of the sea of this world, so that the crowds may gather together to Him, and hear upon the shore the things which they were not able to hear within: Jesus is in the midst of the waves; the sea tosses Him hither and thither; but secure in the majesty of His own power He causes His vessel to come near the land:

CHAP.
IV.
1—9.

S. Matt.
xiii. 3—9.
S. Luke
viii. 5—8.

the people free from danger, and not compassed by trials which they could not bear, stand safely on the shore, and listen to His words.

2. *He said unto them in His doctrine,* 3. *Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:* 4. *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.* 5. *And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:* 6. *But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.* 7. *And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.* 8. *And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.* 9. *And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

The first
parable.

This parable, which stands out so conspicuously as the first which the Lord spoke, is related by S. Mark in almost the same words as S. Matthew. Any remarks upon it therefore which can be made in this place might have been made when it occurred in the former Gospel. The parable is however so full and instructive, that it might easily be made the subject of many more notes than the method of this Commentary allows; and even after it has passed under our review this second time its teaching will be far from exhausted. I shall occupy the present note by calling attention to one feature of our Lord's parable, which for many reasons is worthy of attention.

It will be observed that our Lord makes the success or failure of the seed to depend entirely upon the quality of the soil into which it fell. The seed was all good

seed, all in fact of one sort, and was all sown by the same sower, and therefore all with equal care. But the ground was not all of the same quality, and so some seed prospered and some failed. The description is true to nature, and therefore we hardly remark that it introduces any theological difficulty; yet when we consider the great stress laid upon the operation of God's Holy Spirit in Scripture and in all orthodox divinity, and the countless efforts made by Apostles and Evangelists and preachers of all ages to persuade us that whatever is good is from above and not of ourselves, we may be disposed to indulge a feeling of surprise that all the fertility should be attributed in the parable to the quality of the earth, and no account be taken of the dews of Heaven.

The success
of the seed
attributed to
the quality
of the
ground.

Two answers may be given concerning the difficulty. In the first place it must not be forgotten, that the divine power of growth is in the *seed*, and that the seed does not come spontaneously from the earth but from the hand of the Divine Sower. And in the second place it should still more be observed, that our Lord was adapting His teaching to particular circumstances and bringing out a particular side of divine truth: He had sown the seed, and we may assume that all the conditions of growth were supplied with the seed, and ever would be: but the result was strangely different in the case of different men: some bringing forth much fruit, others little or none: the Lord described this result, which would be so often repeated in the experience of the Apostles and of all their successors, under a parable, and who can say that the description is not a true one? the action of divine grace was not that, which *this* parable was designed chiefly to illustrate; it was rather the difference between one man and another with respect

CHAP.

IV.

3—13.

to the result produced upon them by the preaching of His Word.

Hence, I may remark by the way, Christians should learn to be charitable in the interpretation they put upon the teaching of Christ's Ministers. They have no right to expect that every sermon should contain every truth of the Gospel. Was the teaching of the Lord Himself constructed upon such a principle? Was not the principle of it quite different? witness this parable of the Sower.

S. Matt.
xiii. 10—13.
S. Luke
viii. 9, 10.

10. *And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable.* 11. *And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:* 12. *That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.* 13. *And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*

Those who
were about
Christ in-
quire of the
parable.

S. Mark, in his report of the application of the disciples to their Master concerning the parable of the Sower, makes an addition to what S. Matthew tells us, which may appear slight, but which in reality is very valuable. S. Matthew speaks of *the disciples* coming and asking Him, but S. Mark tells us that they who came were *they that were about Him with the twelve*. Hence it was not the twelve only to whom Christ revealed *the mystery of the kingdom of God*; it was not all except those that were elected by His own free choice, who were described by Him as *those without*.¹

¹ The phrase *those without* may imply those *outside the house*, into which those who were anxious for teaching had followed the Lord; those

the term *disciples* had a wider meaning than *the twelve*; in fact from the expression used by S. Mark it would seem just to conclude, that all those who listened to the teaching of Christ and were willing to be reckoned as His disciples were admitted to His more confidential expositions of the mysteries of the kingdom. And if this be so, then the conduct of Christ upon this occasion is no exception to the rule of His actions in general, but quite in accordance with the method of His dealings in our own days with those who really follow Him and with those who only listen to His words.

S. Mark does not make a formal reference to the fulfilment of prophecy as does S. Matthew, but he reports our Lord as adopting the words of prophecy, and declaring that He acted as He did lest the people should be converted, and their sins forgiven them: words full of mystery, and which, if used by any other beside Him who did use them, would probably have been carped at by many who think they understand the Gospel thoroughly; but words to be reverently examined and thought upon and taken as suggestive of the reflection, that there are conditions of heart to which Christ will not openly reveal Himself, but from which He will advisedly conceal His glory.

Our Lord says to His disciples, *know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?* by which I suppose Him to mean, that the principle of the construction of all His parables is so far the same, that

without would thus represent symbolically all those who do not seek intimate communion with Christ. Compare S. Mark ix. 28, where we find that the disciples, desiring an explanation of the reason why they could not perform a certain mighty work, asked Him privately *when He was come into the house*. This view is suggested by Neander.

CHAP.
IV.
10—13.

the same key will unlock them all: they all set forth some view of the kingdom of Heaven, and the explanation of one helps very much towards the explanation of the rest: not that one is a repetition of the other, far from it, but as the thorough study of one good book, or one good picture, or one branch of science, helps towards the study of others, so I conceive that the Lord would declare the understanding of this great leading parable to be the proper preparation for entering upon the examination of the rest. And I note this the rather, because it involves a general truth: let a man once know God and understand His dealings in any one department of His operations, and then he will find it comparatively easy in all other departments to know His ways and to recognise His hand.

S. Matt.
xiii. 18—23.
S. Luke
viii. 11—15.

14. *The sower soweth the word.* 15. *And these are they by the way-side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.* 16. *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.* 18. *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.* 20. *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

The interpretation of the parable of the Sower, which

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IV.

14—20.

The Lord
interprets
the parable
of the Sower.

our Lord was pleased to give, is reported in very nearly the same manner by S. Matthew and S. Mark; and the care with which they, and indeed S. Luke also, have recorded His own authoritative explanation of His own words, neither adding thereto nor diminishing therefrom, may perhaps supply us with a hint as to the manner in which we should receive divine revelations wherever they have been clearly made to us.

The few words, *the sower soweth the word*, are peculiar to S. Mark, and it may be noticed that the Lord does not add to this explanation by telling us either who the sower is, or what the word is that he sows. S. Matthew speaks of *the word of the kingdom*, and S. Luke of *the word of God*; S. Mark's simple expression *the word* includes both, and comprehends the message of the Gospel in its first publication, and also all messages of whatever kind sent by the Spirit of God to the soul of man. The expression *the word* is comprehensive therefore, rather than indefinite; and the same may be said of the expression *the sower*; the omission of any definition of who he is may suggest to us, that the Lord did not intend to confine the office to Himself, nor even to His disciples, but rather to include in the term all those persons and all those spiritual influences, by which the word of truth is sown in the human heart: sometimes the seed may be sown we know not how, just as in the scattered islands of the Pacific it is sometimes hard to say how certain trees were planted there; family influences, passing hints, accidental as they seem to us, the casual reading of some book, or the like, may sow a seed which will afterwards spring up: and when no human hand can be detected sowing the seed, then the sower is God Himself.

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IV.
14—20.

I have already noticed the fact that the parable of the Sower, in treating of the good or bad success of the seed, omits all mention of those blessed influences by which seed is made fruitful. This omission is rendered the more striking by the prominence given to spiritual influences of another kind: in some cases Satan takes away the seed, in others affliction and persecution arise, in others the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things choke the word; it is only in the case of the seed on the good ground that all notice of influences from without is omitted. Are we to conclude that there are no such influences? or does not the mention of them in the case of failure argue rather that in the case of success it may be taken for granted that mightier counteracting influences were at work, and still more that such influences are ever at hand for those who will faithfully use them?

S. Luke
viii. 16—18.
Compare
also S. Matt.
v. 15, and
vii. 2.

21. *And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?*¹ 22. *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad.* 23. *If any man have ears to ear, let him hear.* 24. *And He saith unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.*² 25. *For he that*

¹ *Is a candle brought*: literally *does a candle come*, implying that the light of which the Lord speaks is not of ourselves but *comes* from God. "Christ the true light comes with the Gospel. Each Christian man should be a candlestick from whom His light may shine"—BENGEL.

² *Unto you that hear shall more be given*. Dean Alford suggests that the meaning is, "more shall be demanded of you who hear, addition shall be made, *i. e.* of account, shall be laid on, as we say."

hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

CHAP.

IV.

21—25.

The resemblance between these verses and two passages in the Sermon on the Mount cannot fail to strike us. It may very well be that in this, as apparently in several other instances, the Lord used the same figure and the same form of exhortation more than once; and this is made still more probable by the consideration that He adopted figures and modes of expression common amongst the Jews of His time.

It is of more importance to inquire the connection between the verses in question and the parable of the Sower which precedes them, or rather the exposition of that parable. And perhaps the manner in which the figure of the light and the bushel occurs in the Sermon on the Mount may help us in this inquiry: for there we find it in immediate connection with the Lord's declaration to the disciples *Ye are the light of the world*, and if we suppose that this thought was in the Lord's mind when He expounded His parable of the Sower, we may understand Him as desiring to append to that exposition a warning of this kind: "do not suppose that I have given you this explanation merely for your own sakes, to make you wiser than your brethren, to raise you above them, and puff your minds up with self-conceit; but believe rather that I have instructed *you* in order that you may instruct others." And this warning would be strengthened by the words *Take heed how ye hear*, conveying the thought, as these words must have done, that it was a deep responsibility to be permitted to listen to the Lord's wisdom, and to be made the channel for the conveyance of the same over the face of the world.

Connection
of these
verses with
the exposition
of the
parable of
the Sower.

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IV.

21—29.

Nor should it be unnoticed that the phrase, *Take heed how ye hear*, would be perceived to have an application beyond those, who were appointed to be themselves teachers in their turn. The warning is of universal application, and is as valuable in our own time as in the days of the Lord's life upon earth; each lesson concerning the kingdom of God is a trust of which an account must be given; people have no right to have their ears tickled with words, or their time made to pass pleasantly in listening to advice which they never intend to follow; God will not be so mocked, and if His word do not produce the fruit of holy living, it will harden the heart and produce the fruit of shame and reproach.

26. *And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*

Second
parable: re-
corded by
S. Mark only.

This parable is recorded by S. Mark only. It is not so minute, and picturesque (if I may use the word) as the greater number of our Lord's parables, but on that very account is in some respects more instructive.

The proper-
ties of *seed*.

It deals with the general properties of *seed*, and gives something of an explanation of the fact of the Lord having in several other instances introduced into His parables the notion of growth. In truth, if we consider that He, who made seed to grow in the ground, and determined that this mysterious process, apparently so hopeless when the seed is buried and begins to rot, should be the means of replenishing the earth, determined

also the law by which His Gospel should spread, we may easily believe that the connection between one process and the other is not merely conventional by way of parable, but real in the very nature of things. We find it almost impossible to get rid of language which implies such connection; we talk of the Gospel taking root, we talk of the Church *flourishing*, we talk of new *branches* of the Church stretching out here and there; and so we bear witness that the physical process of vegetation is the simplest and best exponent of the spiritual process, by which the Church is spread.

The parable will (I think) be best understood, not by endeavouring to give to each little clause of it a separate interpretation, but by looking to its general drift. Our Lord was sowing a seed which was to take root and flourish, and spread through the earth. His disciples might feel some fears as to the success of the effort; was it a suitable seed? was it a suitable soil? were all the conditions satisfied, which were necessary for a successful issue? Our Lord solves all such doubts and fears by reference to the ordinary case of sowing seed; the farmer casts his seed into the earth with perfect faith; his rest is not disturbed by anxiety; he does not trouble himself to comprehend the mysterious process, by which his seed is to be converted into corn; he trusts the laws of nature, or, if he would express himself more piously, he trusts to the fact that God who made the seed made also the earth to receive it, the rain to nourish it, the sun to warm it. Now the case of the sowers of the word of God was precisely analogous: they might trouble themselves in vain to explain the process, by which the word which they were preaching in Palestine should take hold upon the heart of the world; but their trouble

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IV.

26—34.

would vanish, if they considered that He who made the word made also the heart of man to receive it, and that it must and would succeed by its own inherent principle of growth.

S. Matt.
xiii. 31—34.
S. Luke
xiii. 18, 19.

30. *And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?* 31. *It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:* 32. *But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.* 33. *And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.* 34. *But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.*

*Third and
last parable.*

This, the last of the parables recorded by S. Mark, is again founded upon the qualities and powers of seed. An example is taken in which the results of vegetation are on a large scale, the seed very small, the plant rising from it not a mere herb, but a tree. In this country we should probably have referred to the acorn and the oak, remarking on the fact of a seed like the acorn supplying after a time fleets of vessels for the war and the commerce of nations. However, after all, the smallness of the seed and the size of the tree form only a slight portion of the mystery, the essence of which is the power of *growth*, a power even in these days of science as completely unexplained, as it was when our Lord used it as a parable of the inherent and inexplicable power of His own word.

S. Mark tells us that the Lord spake *many such parables*, and S. Matthew has preserved for us several

which S. Mark has omitted; but we can by no means feel sure that even in S. Matthew's Gospel we have them all, indeed there is every reason to suppose the contrary. The very slight record however which S. Mark has given of so important a portion of the Lord's teaching, consistent as it is with the total omission of such portions as the Sermon on the Mount, may teach us how different is the principle of the construction of the Gospels from that of mere human biographies, and should make us cautious in any attempts we may feel disposed to make in forming theories concerning them.

The words *as they were able to hear it* are peculiar to S. Mark's account of the Lord's teaching, and ought to be observed. Interpreters have differed as to the meaning to be assigned to them; some being disposed to take them in that which seems their obvious sense, namely, that Christ adapted His teaching to the wants of His hearers; others thinking that this interpretation brings the words into conflict with what has been said before concerning the intention that the people should not understand. But without forgetting that the parabolic form of teaching was adopted in consequence of the hardness of heart of the people, may we not see in these words the manner in which the Lord tempered judgment with mercy? Surely there was still love and condescension in the Lord's teaching; else why did He teach at all? And though He might feel constrained to teach less plainly than He did in former days, was there not still a gentle concession to infirmity, and a choice of parables which should commend themselves to those amongst the multitude who had ears to hear?

35. *And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.*

CHAP.
IV.
35—41.

S. Matt.
viii. 18—27.
S. Luke
viii. 22—25.

36. *And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships.* 37. *And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.* 38. *And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?* 39. *And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*¹ 40. *And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?* 41. *And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?*

The storm
on the Lake.

This account of the storm or squall on the Lake of Gennesaret is one of peculiar interest, regarded as indicating that it has come to us from one who was an eyewitness of the scene described, and was also well acquainted with such scenes. In fact, the general belief of antiquity, that S. Mark's Gospel does in reality represent the teaching of S. Peter, finds in this history a great amount of internal evidence to its truth. I shall content myself with indicating several points which exhibit S. Peter as the real narrator.

In verse 35 we have the expression, *Let us pass over unto the other side*; an expression which would hardly be used by any one but a dweller by the side of the

¹ The calm appears to have immediately followed the cessation of the wind, contrary to the ordinary course of things. So that the stillness of the waters was not a mere consequence of the subsidence of the wind; but, as Christ addressed His words to both elements, so both elements obeyed. I have noted this briefly in the commentary upon the parallel place of S. Matthew.

Lake, and probably not by him if he had committed the account to writing long after the event. S. Luke says, *the other side of the Lake*.

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IV.
35—41.

In verse 36, there are two points worthy of notice. The expression *as He was*, which is left unexplained, refers to something peculiar which was in the mind of S. Peter at the time, and would hardly have been inserted by a writer long after the event. An almost similar remark applies to the notice, *that there were also with Him other little ships*; for this fact is one not used afterwards in the narrative, and is the passing observation of one who saw the little ships in company.

In verse 37, S. Mark uses an appropriate word to denote the storm, or rather the *squall*, which S. Matthew does not; and moreover he tells us that the waves struck the boat so that she began to *fill*, which expresses more accurately what S. Matthew describes by saying, that *the ship was covered with waves*.

In verse 38, S. Mark tells us not only the part of the boat in which the Lord was when He fell asleep, namely, the *hinder part*, but tells us also that He was asleep *on a pillow*, or rather on *the cushion*, or *seat cover*, probably a sheepskin for the accommodation of the man at the helm, and which rolled up formed a pillow.¹

Little points such as these ought not to be treated as trifles, if they serve to bring home to us the facts recorded, and to impress upon our minds more vividly the circumstances of our Saviour's life.

¹ "Some of the Fathers give a spiritual meaning to this circumstance. When the storm of Satan's fury raged most fiercely against the bark of the Church, Christ was reclining in the sleep of death on the wooden *pillow* of the cross. But He awoke from the slumber of death, and rebuked the waves and the wind, and there was a great calm."—WORDSWORTH.

CHAP.

V.

1—8.

S. Matt.
viii. 28, 29.
S. Luke
viii. 26—29.

CHAPTER V.

1. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.* 2. *And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,¹* 3. *Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:* 4. *Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.* 5. *And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* 6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him,* 7. *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most High God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not.* 8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*

*Sixth
Miracle.*

S. Matthew speaks of the Lord and His disciples coming into the country of the *Gergesenes* or of the *Gerasenes* (for that is perhaps the true reading), whereas S. Mark tells us that they came into the country of the *Gadarenes*. The discrepancy is of no great im-

¹ The phrase used here and elsewhere to express demoniacal possession is worthy of notice. *A man with an unclean spirit* might be translated *in an unclean spirit*, and might then be compared with the phrase so frequently used by S. Paul, in Christ Jesus, as for example Rom. viii. 1, *no condemnation for them which are in Christ Jesus*.

portance except as an indication of the independence of the two Evangelists of each other; but it may be remarked, that whereas we know little or nothing of any city or country named Gergesa or Gerasa, we do know something of Gadara, and all that we do know fits in admirably well with what we here read concerning it. Gadara was the chief city of Peræa, and stood at a short distance from the southern extremity of the sea of Galilee, and was chiefly inhabited by heathen people. If modern travellers have rightly identified it, we may say that it still exhibits those *tombs* in which the man with the unclean spirit had his dwelling; the country is formed of a limestone rock, well suited for excavations, and generally also exhibiting natural caverns capable of being used as dwellings either for the living or the dead.

The first three Evangelists all report the very remarkable interview of our Lord with the possessed Gadarene. S. Mark as usual is more circumstantial than S. Matthew. The only real discrepancy between their accounts is, that S. Matthew speaks of *two* demoniacs and S. Mark of only *one*; a discrepancy which it is perhaps hardly worth while to endeavour to account for, as it may be explained in many ways. It is more important to observe, that S. Mark adds several particulars of very great interest. In the first place, he tells us more of the condition of the man with the unclean spirit; many attempts had been made to restrain him without success; no man could *tame* him, but he was always night and day in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones; a very fearful picture of the desperate spiritual condition to which the man was reduced. S. Mark makes equally

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V.
1—8.

prominent the change which came over the man as soon as Jesus appeared: *he ran and worshipped Him*; notice the word *ran*; the spell of the Lord's presence affected him at once, and constrained the poor wild creature whom no man could tame to *run and worship*. Yet, after this promising commencement, observe how the evil spirit reasserts its power; after worshipping Jesus the man cries out, *What have I to do with Thee, Jesus Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not*; here it is the evil spirit speaking, and yet he assumes the personality of the man, and ventures to say *I*. And it was Christ Himself who had stirred up this war of opposing elements in the man's mind: Christ had said, *Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit*; and this command, though one of mercy, had the effect of bringing out all the hatred and fears of the indwelling demon; and so for the moment love is changed to fear, and worship is replaced by the inhuman adjuration that Christ will not torment. However, it is but for the moment; we shall soon see how Christ dealt with the malady, and how complete was the cure.

S. Matt.
viii. 30—33.
S. Luke
viii. 30—34.

9. *And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.* 10. *And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.* 11. *Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.* 12. *And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.* 13. *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in*

the sea. 14. *And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.*

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V.
9—14.

The desperate condition of this afflicted man is brought out into great prominence by the inquiry of the Lord, *What is thy name?* and the answer of the evil spirit. The Lord uses the singular number *thy*, but the answer shews that the case is far beyond the possession of a single spirit; *my name is Legion*,¹ is the reply; the Roman word for a body consisting of some thousands of soldiers being adopted to express the multitudinous character of the possession. Possibly the name might display more than mere number; might it not also convey the notion of a regularly organized force,² a body of spirits acting in concert for the one great end of crushing the intellectual and moral being of the man, whom they were permitted to torment? just as we convey a deeper notion of danger when we speak of a city being invested by an *army*, than when we describe it as attacked by a *mob*.

The legion
of demons.

It may be noticed, that it is taken for granted that

¹ "Among the Jews, when a man would express a great number of anything, it was not unusual to name a *Legion*. R. Eliezer ben Simeon saith, *It is easier for a man to nourish a Legion of olives in Galilee, than to bring up one child in the land of Israel.* Among the Talmudists a *Legion* bespeaks an unclean company, at least they reckoned all the Legions for unclean. The Rabbins deliver, *A Legion that passeth from place to place, if it enter into any house, the house is thereby become unclean.*"
LIGHTFOOT.

"The number of men in a legion was different at different times. In the time of Polybius (about B.C. 150) it was 4200."—ADAM'S *Roman Antiquities*.

² In confirmation of this observe that in verse 12 the legion of demons all agreed in their petition to Christ, and even when they entered the swine they still acted in concert.

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9—14.

the word *Legion* will be understood by the readers of the Gospel: so it undoubtedly would be: there was no corner of the Roman Empire where the Roman Legions did not circulate, and if this Gospel were (as is generally believed) published in Rome there would be still less necessity for explaining the term.

Moral
teaching of
the miracle.

The existence of difficulties peculiar to this miracle has been acknowledged in the commentary upon the parallel place of S. Matthew. I shall add nothing on the subject here; but, looking to the moral teaching of the miracle, may we not perhaps learn, that when the high powers of a man are permitted to yield to the influence of evil, the vast gap which separates him from the brute creation is rendered fearfully narrow? do we not often speak of men by drunkenness and debauchery lowering themselves to the level of the brutes? and does not the fact, that upon one occasion a transfer of the powers of evil from the body and soul of a man to the bodies of swine, the type of uncleanness, was actually made, indicate that there is a nearer connection between unspiritualized man and absolute brutality than the pride of human nature would be disposed to allow?¹

S. Matt.
viii. 34.
S. Luke
viii. 35—37.

15. *And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*
16. *And they that saw it told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.* 17. *And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.*

¹ Dr. South draws a curious lesson from this miracle. Speaking of the manner in which Satan can adapt himself to circumstances in his temptation of men, he observes: "Though the very nature of swine hurries them into the foulest dirt and mire, yet to serve a turn, we read, he can make them run as violently into the water."

The account of the change produced in the condition of the possessed man is very minute and very beautiful. S. Mark repeats the phrase of *the legion*, in order to keep up the remembrance of the intensity of this case of possession, and then puts in immediate contrast with this description of the poor man's former condition an equally minute picture of that, into which Christ's grace and power had brought him. He was *sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind*; all his excited condition of body gone, his humanity reasserted by his consenting to be clothed, and his mind restored to its tone of health.¹

CHAP.
V.
15—17.

The completeness of the cure.

What was the effect of such a sight upon those who witnessed it? They were afraid; filled, not with love and desire to worship Christ, but with dread of Him, as of one having awful power over the rest of His race. They looked upon Him in fact as an enchanter and not as a Saviour, and therefore their only emotion in His presence was shrinking and fear. This may teach us how mistaken those persons are, who imagine that the power of working miracles is a sufficient instrument for establishing the claims of a teacher. No miracle could be more decisive, or more directed to the hearts of men, than that which the Lord had worked on this occasion, and yet it produced no good effect whatever upon the Gadarenes. The fact is, that much previous education and preparation are necessary in order to make a miracle effectual; in certain cases it may be wholesome or even necessary, but it is of the nature of a very violent

The effect of the miracle on the Gadarenes gives a lesson concerning the use of miracles.

¹ "The Gentile world was now possessed, as it were, with a Legion of evil spirits; it could not be bound by any laws, it tore their bonds asunder. Christ came from Heaven to deliver it from those evil spirits and to cast them out; so that being clothed in the robe of faith and in its right mind, it might come and sit at His feet."—WORDSWORTH.

CHAP. V. 15—20. medicine, which if administered indiscriminately may do much more harm than good. Might not one of the purposes of our Lord in working this miracle, which in some respects is of so exceptional a kind, have been to shew, how impracticable it would have been for Him to establish His kingdom in the world by mere force of miracles?

There seems to be something of a reproachful or even sarcastic tone in the account, which S. Mark gives, of the report made of the miracle by the eyewitness: *They told how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and concerning the swine.* What a connection of two different things! And yet it may be questioned, whether the latter part of the account had not more weight with the Gadarenes than the former; *they began to pray Him to depart*; surely the deliverance of the demoniac could not be the only cause, it must have been the loss of the swine.

S. Luke
viii. 38, 39.

18. *And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.* 19. *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.* 20. *And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.*

The prayer
of the healed
demoniac.

This is an interesting portion of the history of the Gadarene demoniac of which S. Matthew tells us nothing. How natural was the prayer of him, who had been healed of such a malady, that he might be with Jesus; the past would seem to him as a horrible dream, too horrible to be dwelt upon, and he would fancy himself nowhere safe except in the company of Him, who had so

thoroughly understood and pitied his case, and shewn such power over evil spirits which no other had been able to bind; he would fear lest, if left by himself in the midst of his old haunts, his mind should be crazed again, and his body again become the abode of demons.

It is very much to be noticed therefore, that Christ did not grant the man's prayer. He did not grant it, because His own kingdom could be more advanced, and God's work better done, by refusing the man's request, and sending him on a mission to those of his own country and kindred who were not likely in any other way to hear of Christ. The work of God must come first; considerations of human comfort and happiness must be taken into account afterwards.

The refusal of the prayer is made still more prominent by its contrast with the granting of two prayers which preceded it. The devils asked permission to go into the swine, and Christ gave permission; the Gadarenes asked Him to depart out of their coasts, and He departed; but when the poor man whom he had healed, overcome with wonder and gratitude and love, asked to be permitted to accompany his healer, *Jesus suffered him not*. Does not this teach us great caution as to the conclusions which we should draw from the appearance of God's favour, and from the open answer of prayers? Prayers may seem to be granted, and yet there may be no real grace and blessing; and prayers may seem to be refused, and yet there may be wisdom and love in the refusal.

The man who had been brought to *his right mind* shewed the soundness of the condition into which the Lord had brought him, by the manner in which he acquiesced in the Lord's decision. He did not renew

CHAP.

V.

18—24.

his petition or complain that it had not been granted, but he started at once on his home-missionary work, and began to *publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him*. And he made all men marvel; how many he converted we do not know, but the expression used by the Evangelist at least proves the zeal, with which this missionary of Christ performed the work, which it had pleased his Master to assign him.

S. Matt.
ix. 18, 19.
S. Luke
viii. 40—42.

21. *And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea.* 22. *And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet,* 23. *And besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.* 24. *And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him, and thronged Him.*

Introduc-
tion to the
eighth
miracle.

We have here the commencement of the history of one of our Lord's most notable miracles, the raising from the dead of the daughter of a Jewish ruler. It is one of the three recorded instances of resurrection. S. Mark gives the account of the transaction much in the same way as S. Matthew, but there are one or two remarks arising from a comparison of the two Evangelists which may be worth noting.

In general it may be stated, that here, as almost always, S. Mark is more full than S. Matthew, and certainly was not in this sense an abbreviator. We learn from this Gospel that the name of the ruler was Jairus, and the mention of the name probably indicates that he was a person well known in Capernaum. S. Mark clears up an obscurity, by telling us that the words of

the ruler were, *My little daughter lieth at the point of death*, instead of *My daughter is even now dead*, which is the form preserved by S. Matthew; it was the near approach of death, not the actual close of the scene, which prompted the father to apply to Christ. Again, S. Mark tells us that when Jesus went with Jairus, not only His disciples followed Him, but *much people followed Him and thronged Him*, which addition is very necessary to enable us to understand fully the history of the woman who was healed of her issue of blood, which immediately follows. It may be noted also, that the sentence which closes the twenty-first verse, *and He was nigh unto the sea*, a sentence to which no reference is afterwards made and apparently unimportant to the rest of the narrative, is thoroughly characteristic of S. Mark's style.

One remark upon the application of Jairus. It would be wrong to say that Jairus was not an earnest disciple of Christ, and that he did not remain faithful afterwards, for we have no ground upon which to make such a charge; but is not the contrast very painful between the conduct of this ruler of the synagogue and that of the rulers of the synagogue in general? In general they were narrow-minded, and opposed to the claims of Christ; but here was a case of a ruler whose little daughter was on the point of death, and forthwith we find him falling at Jesus' feet and beseeching Him greatly. Jesus, the giver of earthly blessings, was welcome; Jesus, the teacher of heavenly truth, and the preacher of the kingdom of God, was too often rejected and despised.

CHAP.
V.
21—24.

Contrast of
Jairus with
other rulers
of the
synagogue.

25. *And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,* 26. *And had suffered many things*

S. Matt.
ix. 20, 21.
S. Luke
viii. 43, 44.

CHAP.
V.
25—28.

of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. 28. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.

*Seventh
Miracle.*

We have in this Gospel a very full account of the miracle by which this woman was healed; it stands out in remarkable contrast with the very brief notice to be found in S. Matthew. It may be observed however that the first three Evangelists have all recorded the miracle; and not only so; they have placed it at exactly the same point of the history, and have all brought out that feature which distinguishes it, namely, that it was (as it were) a parenthesis in another miracle. The Lord was already pledged to go and do a work of mercy for Jairus, and one of the greatest works He ever performed; but the faith of a poor woman in the crowd compelled Him to perform another work first, and so has given us a lesson upon the abundant character of Christ's mercy, ever ready to flow in all fit channels, an inexhaustible store of blessing to those who come to Him in faith.

The language in which S. Mark describes the condition of this woman is very strong, and its force is made greater by the fact that S. Luke, who was himself a physician, has (if I may so speak) softened it down: she had *suffered many things of many physicians*,¹ and

¹ On the words *had suffered many things of many physicians*, Lightfoot observes, "And it is no wonder: for see what various and manifold kinds of medicines are prescribed." He then gives a number of curious remedies, one of which is as follows: "Let them dig seven ditches: in which let them burn some cuttings of such vines as are not circumcised, (that is, that are not yet four years old). And let her take in her hand a cup of wine. And let them lead her away from this ditch, and make

had spent¹ *all that she had*; and the result was, not the proof of the incurability of her malady, as in S. Luke, but the continued increase of her infirmity; *she was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse*. This language is worthy of notice, regarded merely as an illustration of the style of the Evangelist; but it is still more worthy of notice when looked upon in its spiritual bearings, and taken as descriptive of the utterly helpless condition of human souls, if left to the care of human physicians. The evil of our hearts, which shews itself in so many ways and with various degrees of intensity, is typified by all the bodily evils which Christ healed, but most pointedly by this, because the woman who was suffering under it had tried all human means and had failed; she had spent her all, and still found herself growing worse; she needed something which by nature she could not have, a regeneration which Divine Power might bring about, but which no human treatment could. And the faith which brought the poor woman to Christ, pressing herself through the crowd, determining not to lose her opportunity, may teach us in like manner the zeal, with which they, who are convinced of the insufficiency of human aid, should seek for that which comes from God.

CHAP.
V.
25—28.

29. *And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.* 30. *And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned*

S. Matt.
ix. 22.
S. Luke
viii. 44—48.

her sit down over that. And let them remove her from that, and make her sit down over another. And in every removal you must say to her, Arise from thy flux."

¹ The word is the same as that employed in S. Luke to express the conduct of the prodigal son; *when he had spent all*; it is sometimes, but not always, used to express *squandering, lavish expenditure*.

CHAP. *Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My*
 V. *clothes?* 31. *And His disciples said unto Him, Thou*
 29—34. *seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou,*
Who touched Me? 32. *And He looked round about*
to see her that had done this thing. 33. *But the woman*
fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her,
came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the
truth. 34. *And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith*
hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy
plague.

*Immedi-
ately.*

S. Mark (as has been observed before) is very fond of the word *immediately*. It occurs frequently in the course of his history, and is found twice in this passage. The manner in which it occurs is worthy of notice. The woman touched Jesus in faith, and *immediately* (*straightway* in the English Version) the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt that she was healed; the touch acted as a charm, the healing followed at once. But there was another thing which happened *immediately*; Jesus *immediately* knew in Himself that virtue was gone out of Him; quickly as the healing had followed the touch, it had not done so without His knowledge and volition; inexhaustible as was the supply of Christ's grace and power, it was not like a large stock of human wealth, from which a little might be taken slily and not be missed; this was the woman's conception of the case, but it was a false one; Christ had performed the miracle just as completely by His own will, as if the woman had applied openly; and therefore, as she was healed *immediately*, so He knew *immediately* that she was healed.

The notice taken by the Lord of the healing, which resulted from touching His clothes, may teach us a lesson

as to the manner in which we should regard the gifts of God. We are prone to take certain things as matters of course; we regard them as natural consequences, as though God's government were a mere machine, in the working of which He has no power or concern. This is precisely the error, into which the woman, whose case we are discussing, fell; she thought that healing would follow from the touching of Christ by necessary consequence; but Christ taught her that everything which comes from Him must be a gift, and that He can withhold healing power if He will.

CHAP.
V.
29—34.

God's go-
vernment
not a ma-
chine.

No wonder that the woman came fearing and trembling, when she perceived that Christ knew all that had happened. It opened to her an entirely new view of the Saviour. She had regarded with great astonishment One, the touch of whose clothes could heal; but her awe was immeasurably greater, when she felt herself in the presence of One, whose touch would *not* heal without His own cognizance and permission. Here was teaching for the woman's mind, healing for her spirit.

35. *While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?* 36. *As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.* 37. *And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.*¹ 38. *And He cometh to the house of the ruler*

S. Matt.
ix. 23—26.
S. Luke
viii. 49—56.

¹ I may here call attention to the peculiarity of the phrase, *John the brother of James*; the same description of S. John is given in the catalogue of Apostles, chap. iii. 17, and S. Matthew has, *James the son of Zebedee and John his brother*, chap. x. 2. Considering the relative magnitude of the two brothers, as we now look back upon their earthly history,

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V.
35—43.

of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39. And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.¹ 40. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years.² And they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43. And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

*Eighth
Miracle.*

Peter, James, and John were the three chosen witnesses of this miracle, as of several other manifestations of the Lord's glory. Remembering the close connection of S. Peter with the Gospel according to S. Mark, we may consider that we have in this very minute record

we should certainly be disposed to describe S. James by his relationship to S. John, not the opposite; and the more so, because there were two James's, but not two Johns. The fact that S. Mark has adopted the opposite course so emphatically is interesting, as one of the numerous indications of the early origin of his Gospel.

¹ On the words, *She is not dead, but sleepeth*, S. Augustine observes: "He spoke the truth. She slept; but she slept to Him only, who had power to raise her up." And in like manner of the words of our Lord concerning Lazarus, *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth*, compared with the words, *Lazarus is dead*, the same father writes, "Both statements were true. To you, he is dead; to Me, he sleeps."

² *Twelve years*: it is a singular coincidence, that the disease of the woman who was healed in this chapter, and the life of the girl who was raised from the dead, began together.

of the miracle the report of an eyewitness. Let us notice a few particulars, which in S. Matthew's shorter history do not appear.

CHAP.

V.

35—43.

First we find, that after Jairus had left his house to seek assistance from Christ his little daughter died, and then certain persons went to him to tell him that all was over, and that he need not trouble the Master any further. Christ, as we with our knowledge of His being and character might have supposed, did not allow the death to interfere with the work of mercy which He had undertaken; but is it not worthy of remark, that the family of Jairus should have at once taken it for granted that death had made all efforts hopeless? They could believe in a miraculous healer of sickness, but not in a miraculous raiser of the dead. Christ shewed that there was in reality no distinction, that He who could do the one work could do the other also: but the people, who thought otherwise, followed (as I apprehend) a natural instinct; and it was therefore a necessary part of our Lord's ministry, that He should in a few cases demonstrate the completeness of His power by loosing even the bands of death. He did this three times, and then He rose from the dead Himself.

The secrecy, with which this miracle was performed, deserves also to be observed. S. Mark tells us, that the Lord suffered the presence only of the father and mother of the damsel and them that were with Him. Why not have made the work as public as possible? What could have advanced the Gospel more, than such a work done in the face of the world? Let it suffice to say, that Christ knew best how to carry on His own work, and that His views of what was best were probably in many things different from our own.

CHAP.

V.

35—43.

*Talitha
Cumi*: the
Lord's own
words.

S. Mark has recorded the very words, which the Lord spake in raising the maiden from death. How few of His very words remain to us! and yet, though the actual sounds are forgotten, the words themselves can never be lost, though Heaven and Earth pass away.

Lastly, notice a curious difference between the terminations of the history in S. Matthew and S. Mark. S. Matthew tells us, that the fame of the miracle went through the whole land; S. Mark records, that Christ straitly charged those who had witnessed the miracle that no man should know it, adding (so entirely in his own style) the little command given by the Lord concerning supplying the damsel with food. We see therefore, by the comparison of the accounts, what we have seen on other occasions; Christ forbidding the publication of His miracles, and forbidding in vain. He could not be hid. It was impossible for men who had seen His works to keep them entirely to themselves, even when Christ commanded them to do so.

CHAP.

VI.

1—6.

S. Matt.
xiii. 54—58.

CHAPTER VI.

1. *And He went out from thence, and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him.* 2. *And when the Sabbath-day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even*

such mighty works are wrought by His hands? 3. Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the Brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him. 4. And Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in His own country, and among His own kin, and in His own house. 5. And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6. And He marvelled because of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages, teaching.

CHAP.
VI.
1—6.

It is to be remarked, in comparing these verses with the parallel passage in S. Matthew, that whereas S. Matthew reports the people of Nazareth as saying, *Is not this the carpenter's Son?* S. Mark gives the phrase thus, *Is not this the carpenter?* This latter version appears to imply that the legend which has been preserved concerning the Lord's early life is true, namely, that He Himself was employed in the workshop. On general grounds there is every probability that it was so; and it is a feature in the Lord's earlier life, which we should by no means shrink from admitting, but contrariwise receive very readily: the admission throws honour upon honest labour, it brings home to our minds more thoroughly the Lord's humanity, and it helps to bring before our minds more vividly the humiliation which the Lord's life on earth involved.

The people spoke of Jesus as *the Son of Mary*, and some might fancy that such words hinted at the doctrine of the virgin conception. If we use the phrase as applied to the Lord, we probably do mean to imply this doctrine: but I think that the true interpretation of the words is rather this, that Joseph was now dead: there are

Is not this
the carpen-
ter?

The Son of
Mary.

CHAP.
VI.
1—6.

several indirect hints in the Gospels of his having early departed from the miraculous scene, in which by God's providence he had been called to take a part; and if he had been now dead for some little time, it is not to be wondered at that the name of Mary, the surviving parent, should be used by the people of Nazareth in order to identify the Lord Jesus.

One other remarkable expression (already noticed in the Commentary on S. Matthew) occurs in this passage. Jesus, we read, *could there do no mighty works*. The unbelief of the people (so to speak) tied His hands. It matters not, whether the Lord abstained from shewing His power in order not to increase the condemnation of unbelieving witnesses, or what the ground really was; it is enough to know, that unbelief is able to shut up that fountain, which faith alone can open. Let it be observed however, that under these circumstances of displeasure the Lord still allowed His mercy to be seen; He could not, or would not, do any mighty work, would not give any public demonstration of His character and His power; but there were some sick folk who needed healing, and He laid His hands upon them privately, in order to exercise His mercy, though He would not work a miracle, in order to remove the general unbelief.

7. *And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;* 8. *And commanded¹ them that*

S. Matt.
x. 1—15.
S. Luke
ix. 1—6.

¹ Any one desirous of finding contradictions between two evangelists may here be gratified. S. Mark represents our Lord as giving permission to the Apostles to take a staff on their journey; but S. Matthew records a staff as amongst the things which they were forbidden to take (Chap. x. 10). How many of the alleged discrepancies of Holy Scripture are of about the same degree of importance!

they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: 9. But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10. And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

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VI.
7—13.

We cannot fail to notice the considerate kindness of the Lord in sending the Apostles out *by two and two*: in this first missionary journey especially, each of them would require that peculiar support and assistance, which can be gained from a dear companion, and not easily in any other way. It is a lesson of missionary wisdom for all times; and it teaches us also how that when He was Himself present to superintend the work, the Lord did not neglect those precautions for success, which human foresight would suggest.

The Apostles
sent two and
two.

It may be observed by the way, that S. Matthew does not tell us, in his account of this mission, that the Apostles were sent two and two; but in enumerating the Apostles, immediately before giving the history of their mission, he gives their names in pairs.

Thus then the twelve Apostles were sent out for the first time by themselves, on what may be regarded perhaps as a trial mission, preparatory to their more continuous missionary work throughout the world after the Lord's ascension into Heaven. And a theological

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VI.
7—13.

conclusion of some interest may be drawn from a comparison of the statements, made by the first three Evangelists. Concerning the mission S. Matthew tells us, that the Lord commanded them to preach, *The kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. S. Mark, that *they preached that men should repent*. S. Luke, that they went *preaching the Gospel*. Hence it would seem to follow, that preaching the Gospel and preaching repentance are not so different as some would have us believe, and that both the one and the other must be included in preaching the kingdom of Heaven.

The use of oil in the healing of the sick by the Apostles in this mission stands out in contrast with the Lord's own practice. We never read of the Lord Himself using oil; the Apostles appear to have adopted it from the common practice of the Jews; the distinction between their application of the remedy and that made by others was, that in their hands the remedy was always effectual through the present power of Christ.¹

14. *And king Herod heard of Him, (for His name was spread abroad :) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in Him.* 15. *Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet,*

S. Matt.
xiv. 1, 2.
S. Luke
ix. 7—9.

¹ Lightfoot's note is as follows :

"The oil therefore was, saith the famous Beza, a symbol of their miraculous power, not a medicament whereby they cured diseases. But the Jews say, and that truly, such an anointing was physical, although it did not always obtain its end. But this anointing of the Apostles ever obtained its end." He adds, "Let it be granted, such anointing was medicinal, which cannot possibly be denied, and then there is nothing obscure in the words of James (v. 14), *Let the elders of the Church be called, and let the sick man be anointed by them, or by others present, that their prayers may be joined with the ordinary means.*"

or as one of the prophets. 16. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

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VI.
14—16.

S. Mark here calls Herod by the name of *king*; he is more correctly designated *tetrarch* by S. Matthew and S. Luke; he was the son of Herod the Great, and his government extended over Galilee. I have remarked, in the parallel passage of S. Matthew, upon the fact of his not having heard of the fame of Jesus before; and I may here add, that possibly the missionary expedition, of which we read in this chapter, may have assisted to bring the result about by giving a wider spread to the Lord's preaching. I may take occasion to observe further upon the curious want of discernment, which characterized the remarks of Herod and his servants concerning the Lord Jesus. Herod himself thought it must be John the Baptist risen from the dead; his conscience suggested this to him; the feeling of shame at having murdered a good man would not let him rest. Others said it was Elijah come upon earth again; and others, who did not venture to assert positively which of the prophets it was, still thought that it was one of the number returned to life. Now the point which I wish to notice is this, that Herod and his servants, though they differed in opinion as to who Christ was, still agreed in seeking for the truth in the graves of the departed; they all sought *for the living amongst the dead*; it might be a prophet just slain, like John the Baptist, or it might be a prophet taken from the earth centuries before, like Elijah; but certainly it must be backwards and not forwards that they were to look for the explanation of the riddle. That *God had visited His people* in a more glorious and blessed manner than He

The views
of Herod and
others con-
cerning
Christ.

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14—23.

had ever visited them before, never entered into the minds of such inquirers as these.

May we not gain some instruction from the error committed by these men? Of course we may learn, that they who have sinned, as Herod did, have to a great extent blinded their own eyes; but besides this, may we not learn, that, in order to understand God's dealings, we must look to Him as one, who not only spake in old times by prophets, but who speaks still, and is ever ready to speak to willing and obedient hearts?

S. Matt.
xiv. 3—5.

17. *For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.* 18. *For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.* 19. *Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:* 20. *For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.*¹

Death of
S. John the
Baptist.

S. Matthew and S. Mark both give us the history of the death of S. John the Baptist; S. Mark, as usual, with a much greater amount of particularity of detail.

But S. Mark not only gives additional details; he throws some very valuable light upon the history. It might have been imagined from S. Matthew's account,

¹ The phrase rendered by *observed him* probably means rather *watched over him, guarded him, protected him*. The margin gives *kept him or saved him*. This is one of the instances given by Dean Trench of "better renderings forsaken, or placed in the margin," and he observes, "It will at once be evident in how much stricter logical sequence the statement of the Evangelist will follow, if this rendering of the passage is admitted."

—TRENCH *on the Authorized Version of the New Testament*, p. 80.

that Herod had an unmitigated dislike of S. John, and that nothing kept him from destroying him except fear of the people; but we find from S. Mark, that, although Herod had been angry with S. John on account of his boldness in rebuking his adulterous connection with Herodias, and had imprisoned him in consequence, still Herod's feeling was very far from being one of mere dislike or hatred. S. Mark's account of Herod's feeling is very worthy of attention. *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.* Here was a feeling of reverence, and almost of regard; but there was no determination to give up his lusts in obedience to S. John's preaching, and therefore there could be no permanent peace and love between Herod and John. We may be reminded perhaps of our own monarch Charles II., who certainly revered Ken and several others like him, and revered them because they were just men, but who could not shake himself free from his lusts and submit himself to their teaching. And as I have mentioned this illustration from history, I may perhaps add another, which is somewhat parallel to the case of Herod and John, in respect of the elevation of the poor preacher and the humiliation of the king, implied in the terms, *Herod feared John.* Palissy, the famous French potter, was imprisoned in the Bastille, when nearly eighty years old, on account of his religious opinions. The king of France visited him, and strove to make him recant. "My good man," said the king, "you have been forty-five years in the service of my mother, or in mine, and we have suffered you to live in your own religion, amidst all the executions and the massacres. Now, however, I am so

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17—26.

pressed, that I have been compelled in spite of myself to imprison you; you will be burnt, if you will not be converted." "Sire," answered Palissy, "you have said several times that you feel pity for me; but it is I who pity you, who have said, *I am compelled*. That is not speaking like a king. I will teach you to talk royally. All your people and yourself cannot compel a Potter to bow down to images of clay."¹

S. Matt.
xiv. 6—9.

21. *And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;* 22. *And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod, and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.* 23. *And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.* 24. *And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.* 25. *And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by-and-by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.* 26. *And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.*

The convenient day.

The word, which is translated *convenient*, is regarded by some as rather meaning *festive*; it was a high day and a holiday. Our translators however seem to have thought, that *convenient* expressed the meaning of the original word more correctly; and the use of the expression may at least suggest to us, that even for such tragical events, and events apparently so injurious to God's Church and the cause of truth, as the murder

¹ *Palissy the Potter*, by H. Morley, vol. ii. p. 197.

of S. John the Baptist, there are seasons permitted in the providence of God. Even in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself there was *a convenient day*. At one period He said, *My time is not yet come*; when He saw the day approaching, He said, *My time is at hand*.

It was a sad day for Herod, when he allowed himself in the midst of his revelry to be trapped into a promise, which he would not have made if he had seen to what it would lead him. But is he to be pitied? Ought we not rather to learn a lesson concerning the danger of joining in such scenes, and putting ourselves in such circumstances, as shall make it probable that we shall be led into sin? Allowance is frequently made for men who commit crimes, because they committed them in a state of intoxication; it may be right and necessary for human law to do this, but it may well be questioned whether in the sight of God the blackness of the crime is much alleviated by the excuse. What right had the criminal to be in a state of intoxication? What right had he to 'resign the attributes of manhood, and the powers of self-control, which God had given him?

However, in Herod's case there was more than this. He was guilty in making the promise, but he was still more guilty in keeping it. Any casuist would have told him, that his promise could not extend to things in themselves unlawful; John Baptist's head was excluded by the nature of the case; but I suspect that Herodias was the keeper of Herod's conscience, and she would take care that he should not get free when once entangled. What a picture we have of the slavery in which a man has bound himself, when he lives such a life as Herod lived; how simple a thing to say, as Joseph did, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin*

Herod
guilty in
keeping his
promise.

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VI.
21—29.

against God? But a wicked man cannot say this, because the devil has the answer ready. *How can you do it?* In the same way as you have already done a hundred similar things in time past.

S. Matt.
xiv. 10—12.

27. *And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,* 28. *And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.* 29. *And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.*¹

The executioner one of Herod's bodyguard.

The name of the officer, who is called in the English version *an executioner*, denotes rather one of the king's bodyguard; the word used by S. Mark is a Latin one, and seems to have belonged to those who were immediately about the Emperor. This remark is of no great importance, except as it shews the influence of Roman customs and Roman language, and as it calls our attention to the hasty arbitrary death which was inflicted upon S. John; no pretence of a trial, no delay in order to see whether the rash promise could not be more mildly interpreted, but an attendant sent out from the banqueting chamber then and there to bring back the head of him, who came as the forerunner of Christ.

The death of S. John the Baptist.

There are few events more worthy of the consideration of humble Christian believers, and of scoffing unbelievers, than this death. Christ had declared John

¹ It may be noted that the word translated by *corpse*, which is applicable to the carcases of animals (S. Matt. xxi. 28), and which from its derivation is expressive of ruin and corruption, is not applied to the body of the Lord. The disciples of John took up his *corpse* and laid it in a tomb; but Joseph of Arimathæa craved the *body* of Jesus and laid *Him* in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock.

to be the greatest of those born of women up to, that time, and we can well understand on what ground the high honour was allotted to him; and the people in general were disposed to assent to the Lord's description of His servant; they were moved by his teaching, and his baptism, as they had not been moved for a long while; they were willing (as our Lord said) for a season to rejoice in his light; and what was the end of it all? John is shut up in prison; he languishes there in apparent uselessness and helplessness, and then on occasion of a merry revelling feast his head is suddenly taken away from him, and his disciples come and bury his corpse in a tomb! So ended to human eyes the life and ministry of S. John the Baptist. But if we regard this as the real end of all, we manifestly make an infinite mistake; S. John had made preparation for the coming of Christ, and now Christ was come, and so S. John was called to his rest and his works followed him. And we may draw from his history this conclusion, applicable to our own times, namely, that when missionaries of Christ's Gospel lose their lives in the work, have their heads cut off (it may be) by savages, and when their bodies are buried in the tomb, the end is not yet; they have prepared the way for the coming of Christ, and their work will not be useless in the eye of Him, whom appearances can never deceive.

30. *And the Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.* 31. *And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.* S. Luke
ix. 10.

The Apostles made their report to their Master of

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VI.
30, 31.

No record
of the doings
of the
Apostles in
their first
mission.

what they had done and what they had taught, but the Evangelist has not preserved any record of what their report was; and the reason probably is this, that the missionary expedition on which the Apostles had been sent was chiefly of a tentative kind, more for the education of the Apostles themselves than for the sake of any permanent results that it was to produce. It was well that the Apostles should be tried, and should realize some of the difficulties of their situation, while yet Christ was with them and was able to hear their troubles and to give them advice.

Hints for
missionary
work.

It will be noted, that when the Apostles returned from this expedition, Christ did not at once send them upon another: on the other hand, He invited them to retire with Him to a desert place and there take rest. We see in this conduct an example of that gentle considerateness of character, which comes out so often in the dealings of Christ with His disciples; He knew what nature could bear, and He knew when nature needed repose; and He knew this, not only because He was the Son of God, but because as the Son of Man He carried that nature Himself and had part in its weaknesses. But besides this lesson concerning our Lord's character, we may learn something concerning the work of the Gospel, and especially missionary work, in all times; we may learn that besides the spirit which will make men go forth without scrip or money, there is needed also the quiet spirit of contemplation apart from the multitude; and when men are chiefly excited by the thought of what they have done and what they have taught, then it may be wise for them to go apart into a desert place and rest awhile with Christ.

The retirement of Christ and His disciples may

teach us a still more general lesson concerning religious retirement. Perhaps upon no point has more error, and consequently more mischief, arisen in the Church; and it may be safely said, that all such error and mischief would have been avoided, if Christians had noticed the principle of the Lord's conduct when He advised His Apostles to retreat. It was when they were worn out with active labour, and as a preparation for renewed labour, that Christ told His Apostles to retire: the desert was a means, not an end: the Apostles were not to become hermits, but they were to *rest awhile*, in order that they might renew their work.

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30—34.

Religious
retirement.

32. *And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.* 33. *And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him.* 34. *And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things.*

S. Matt.
xiv. 13, 14.
S. Luke
ix. 10, 11.

A word occurs in these verses, which I cannot but think characteristic of S. Mark's style, or perhaps more properly of S. Peter's. In describing the manner in which the people followed our Lord, S. Mark says, they *ran*,—an expression which gives the notion of excitement and haste, and the more so because it can hardly be intended to be taken in its literal and strict signification.¹ I note that S. Mark has used the same phrase with regard to that young man, who came to ask the Lord what he should do to attain eternal life; he tells

The people
running to
Christ.

¹ Notice the word *run* again in verse 55. S. Mark's favourite word *straightway* or *immediately* occurs just before: *straightway they knew Him, and ran through the whole region round about.*

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32—34.

us that there came one *running* and kneeling to Him. But besides this passage, in which the Evangelist probably describes the simple fact of the case, I may refer to the frequent use of the word *immediately* or *straightway* in this Gospel, which has already been noticed, and which gives a character of haste and movement to the narrative, as being an example of the same general style of writing.

The phrase *when Jesus came out* appears to refer to the boat, in which they had crossed the lake; *when Jesus came out of the boat*; and this accords with the expression in the previous verse, *the people outwent them*. The little fact thus revealed is worthy of observation, as a commentary upon the weary life of our Lord; He wished His disciples to retire to the desert to take some rest, but the people would let them have none. If the reasons which prompted them to follow Christ were really the love of His doctrine, then we may gain a lesson from their importunity, and we may be sure that, however much it might increase His labours, Christ would be pleased by such importunity; what displeases Christ is the quiet easy indifference of those, who care not for His presence, and will not put themselves out of the way to hear His words.

Teaching
and healing.

S. Mark tells us that the Lord was moved with compassion, and began to teach the people many things: S. Matthew tells us that He healed their sick: both statements no doubt are true, and it is interesting to observe how intimately the two kinds of ministry were associated together in our Lord's practice. He healed the body, and so did an act of compassion and made His way to the heart; and, having done this, He attempted His deeper work of healing, and applied His divine words to the spirits of those who came to hear Him.

35. *And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:* 36. *Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.* 37. *He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?* 38. *He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.* 39. *And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.* 40. *And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.* 41. *And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all.* 42. *And they did all eat, and were filled.* 43. *And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.* 44. *And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.*

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VI.

35—44.

S. Matt.
xiv. 15—21.
S. Luke
x. 12—17.

S. Mark's account of this miracle of feeding the multitude in the wilderness differs very little from that given by S. Matthew, but there are one or two little touches indicative of his own peculiar style. Thus S. Mark mentions that the multitude sat down on the green grass; and this passing observation of the colour of the grass is interesting, when taken in connection with the fact which S. John records, namely, that the Feast of the Passover was nigh, because it thus appears that the miracle was wrought in the spring time, when the grass would be green. Again, S. Mark is true to his own style when he mentions the *two hundred pennyworth*

*Ninth
miracle.*

CHAP. *of bread*; not merely, shall we go and buy bread, but
 VI. shall we buy two hundred pennyworth? And again,
 35—44. S. Mark adds to the general account of the distribution
 of the food this little circumstance concerning the two
 fishes, that *He divided them amongst them all*.

The arrang-
 ing of the
 multitude.

A more instructive point is brought under our notice, when S. Mark tells us, more particularly than S. Matthew, the arrangements which the Lord Himself made for feeding the multitude. He commanded to make them all sit down *by companies*; and in accordance with this command they sat down *in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties*. In other words, the feeding of the multitude was conducted upon an orderly, well arranged plan; there was no confusion, no giving to this man before that, because he was more importunate, no possibility of the strong gaining an advantage over the weak, and no hurry to begin the work before all the arrangements were properly made. Now if we regard the feeding of the multitude as a parable concerning the work which the Apostles were to do in the world afterwards, a parable of the spiritual feeding of mankind with the bread from Heaven, which Christ should supply them withal, then these orderly arrangements made by the command of our Lord are very full of instruction: the tendency of men, when they once realize the fact that they are surrounded by a hungry multitude, is to throw a piece of bread here and a piece there, to make irregular efforts to supply the wants which they perceive to exist; but this is not Christ's way, and therefore it is not the wise way; order must in this, as in every other work of God, be the root of all success.

S. Matt.
 xiv. 22—27.

45. *And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto*

Bethsaida, while He sent away the people.¹ 46. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. 47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. 48. And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. 49. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50. For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.²

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VI.
45—50.

What did the Apostles expect that the Lord would do, when He sent them away in the boat and Himself remained behind with the multitude? Certainly they did *not* expect that He would follow them upon the water; but I apprehend that they had now advanced so far in their Christian education as to refrain from questioning their Master's purposes; they felt that He was altogether above themselves, and that they had only to obey and leave results with Him.

The disciples sent away from Christ.

Accordingly the disciples got into the boat, and left their Master, who, after dismissing the multitude, retired

¹ This Bethsaida was on the west side of the Lake of Gennesaret, and was the city of Andrew and Peter: the Bethsaida, afterwards called Julias, near which the miracle of the loaves and fishes was performed (S. Luke ix. 10) was on the east side. The name Bethsaida signifies a place of fish, a fishing place, and we need not wonder that two villages on the border of a lake abounding in fish should bear such a name.

² I cannot fail in passing to call attention to S. Mark's remarkable omission of the history of S. Peter's walking on the water. As I have observed in my introduction to S. Matthew, possibly S. Peter's modesty may have prevented him from making this event a part of his own memoirs.

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VI.

45—50.

to a mountain, according to His wont, for prayer. By so doing, it may be remarked by the way, He has taught all His ministers, that their success in dealing with the multitude depends very much upon their mode of employing their time, when the multitude is not with them; to be alone with God and make application to Him in secret is an absolutely necessary condition of producing an effect for good upon their brethren.

The disciples in the boat by themselves.

But how fare the disciples by themselves? S. Peter, speaking through S. Mark, has given us a very minute account of the trouble into which they immediately fell; the wind was contrary, their sails useless, they were obliged to toil at their oars, and even so they could make no progress: probably S. Peter, himself a fisherman on the lake, was one of those to whom the toil of rowing fell. Then came Jesus walking on the waves; S. Mark says that *He would have passed by them*, that is, as I suppose, He did not walk straight towards the vessel, as though it were His intention to join them at once; He only shewed Himself to them, and allowed the vision to work in their minds and to call forth their faith. This conduct is symbolical; it may intimate to us, that the Saviour does not always come directly to those who are in trouble, but approaches them by degrees and slowly, allows their faith to grow, and permits them to deem Him only a phantom, until they are convinced of His reality by the words, *It is I, be not afraid*.

The words, *Be not afraid*, do not, I apprehend, apply to the fear arising from the roughness of the sea; that merely caused them to toil, but the indistinct vision of Christ, and the uncertainty who or what He was caused them all to be *troubled*; and it was this trouble of mind, arising from His own appearance to them in the dark

and upon the sea, which Christ graciously dispelled by talking with them and bidding them to be of good cheer.

51. *And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.* 52. *For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.* 53. *And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.* 54. *And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him.* 55. *And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was.*¹ 56. *And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole.*

CHAP.
VI.
45—56.

S. Matt.
xiv. 32—36.

We may note in these verses that S. Mark uses the technical expression for bringing a ship to land or into harbour, translated in our version by the words *they drew to the shore*, and that he is the only New Testament writer who uses it.

We may observe also that the conclusion of this chapter is very characteristic of S. Mark's style, and may with this view be advantageously compared with the conclusion of his first chapter; there is an excitement and movement in the description of the effect produced by our Lord's presence, which does not belong to any other Evangelist. We find here again S. Mark's favourite word, *straightway* or *immediately*; *straightway they knew Him*; and it will be seen that the earnestness

The excitement produced by the Lord's presence.

¹ *To carry about.* The word "implies that they occasionally had wrong information of His being in a place, and had to carry the sick about, following the rumour of His presence."—ALFORD.

CHAP.

VI.

51—56.

with which the Evangelist tells his story has driven him into an ambiguity of expression. Who were they that straightway knew Him? From S. Mark's account alone it might appear to be they who were with Him in the boat; but S. Matthew has inserted the words, *the men of that place*, and so has corrected the ambiguity.

The amazement of the disciples not justifiable.

A more important remark arises from the account which S. Mark gives of the conduct of the disciples when the Lord joined them in the boat. He tells us that they were *sore amazed and wondered*; and he adds a few words which seem to shew that they ought not to have been so much astonished. It can hardly fail, I think, to strike a reader of the Gospels, that one miracle did not prepare the minds of the disciples for the next so completely as we should have expected. We might have thought that when one great demonstration of power had been given, all others could have been taken for granted; that a miracle once understood and believed would have completed the work of preparing the mind of the person witnessing it for all other miracles. This however was not the case; and it appears from the observation here made by the Evangelist, that in reviewing the conduct of the disciples this strange feature was not unnoticed by him. *They considered not the miracle of the loaves*; they ought to have done so, otherwise the Evangelist would not have commented upon the omission; and he adds the explanation, for *their hearts were hardened*, not hardened by any wilfulness of conduct like the heart of Pharaoh, but simply, as I conceive, by circumstances and old habits of thought; and when hardness of heart shews itself not in disobedience but in amazement at Christ's power, it is a hardness which He will easily forgive.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAP.
VII.

1—4.

1. *Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the Scribes, which came from Jerusalem.* S. Matt. xv. 1, 2,
 2. *And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault.* 3. *For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.*¹ 4. *And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.*²

The Evangelist has mentioned that these Pharisees and Scribes came from Jerusalem, probably not merely Scribes from Jerusalem.

¹ For the word *oft* the margin gives *with the fist, or up to the elbows*. It should be noted also that the word *wash* in verse 3 is not in the original the same as the word *wash* in verse 4. The meaning is perhaps this: *Those that remain at home eat not unless they wash the fist, but those that come from the market eat not unless they plunge their fists in the water, being ignorant as to what uncleanness they may have come near in the market.* The latter is a more extensive washing than the former, intended to guard against possible defilement. This is the view of Lightfoot.

² *Tables*: the margin gives *beds*, which appears to be the better rendering. Dean Trench observes that "the context points clearly here to these in a special aspect, namely, to the *benches* or *couches* on which the Jews reclined at their meals." The passage would however be quite intelligible, if *beds* were taken in an unrestricted sense; beds might, as Lightfoot writes, become unclean in two ways; namely, either by having been used by persons in a state of defilement, as by a leper or a woman in childbirth, or by having been touched by anything which had come in contact with persons so defiled.

CHAP. because this was a fact, but because the mention of it
 VII. implies that the persons who now came together unto
 1—5. Jesus were fresh from the fountain-head of all Jewish
 wisdom; they might have been residents in Jerusalem
 who had followed Christ from thence, or they might be
 Galilæans who had been keeping the Passover, which
 we know was approaching when the miracle of the loaves
 recorded in the preceding chapter was performed; but
 anyhow S. Mark appears to wish to impress upon us,
 that the lore of Jerusalem doctors was now brought to
 bear upon Christ.

Why people
 come to
 Christ.

The expression, *then came together unto Him*, may
 raise a sad thought in our minds, when we compare it
 with similar phrases used concerning those, who came to
 Christ to sit at His feet and hear His words. Thus the
 report of the Sermon on the Mount opens with the
 phrase, *His disciples came unto Him*; the Pharisees
 came and the disciples came, but those came to carp
 and find fault and shew their own superior wisdom,
 these to listen as little children and learn the way of
 life. And so there may be many who in a certain sense
 come to Christ amongst ourselves, and there may be
 very different causes of their coming, and also very
 different effects.

Defiled
 hands.

I apprehend that these Pharisees were ready to find
 fault as soon as circumstances permitted; and the occa-
 sion was given by some of the disciples, who eat with
 defiled hands. S. Mark differs from S. Matthew in
 giving an explanation of the meaning of defiled hands:
 S. Matthew's Jewish readers would need no such ex-
 planation, but S. Mark, publishing his Gospel at Rome,
 might well assume that there would be many readers
 of his Gospel, who would be at a loss to understand

in what way the disciples had offended; and so S. Mark explains that *defiled* means merely *unwashed* hands. It may be added, that the Greek word used by S. Mark requires explanation more than the word *defiled* by which our translators have rendered it; for the strict meaning of the word is *common*, and it is so rendered in Acts x. 14, where S. Peter says, that he has never eaten anything *common* or unclean; the word implies therefore *legal* rather than *natural* defilement, a pollution according to a ceremonial tradition, not according to ordinary rules of cleanliness.

The disciples undoubtedly broke through the traditional custom with the Lord's sanction; we find that on another occasion He broke through it Himself. A religious principle was involved in doing so; traditions had been allowed to take the place of divine laws; a yoke had been gradually put upon the necks of men which they could not bear, and the road to Heaven was darkened and perplexed by human inventions and follies.

5. *Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked Him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?* 6. *He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.* 7. *Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* 8. *For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.* S. Matt.
xv. 1—9.

Third reference to
prophecy.

Our translators appear to have used a text which gives in the fifth verse the same Greek word as that

CHAP.
VII.
5—8.

which is rendered by *unwashed* in the second verse. Other copies of S. Mark's Gospel give the word which in the second verse is rendered *defiled*: and this is, I think, the more suitable word; for the Scribes and Pharisees objected against the disciples that their hands were *unwashed*, simply on the ground that as such they were ceremonially defiled or technically unclean, and they would therefore most probably ask the question in a form which would imply this: *Why do Thy disciples eat bread with hands common or unclean?*

How the
words of
prophets
were ful-
filled.

The Lord replied to the cavil by a reference to the prophet Isaiah, which pointed out the hypocrisy of the accusers and the difference between a formal service according to traditions of elders and a service of the heart. No one can doubt the applicability of the prophet's words to the spiritual state of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's time; and therefore I will pass by this view of the subject, in order to remark that the manner of our Lord's quotation throws some light upon the general structure of prophecy and its relation to events to come after. If we look to the chapter of Isaiah from which our Lord quotes, we shall perceive that the prophet is pouring out in the name of the Lord a vehement sentence upon the Jews of those days, and is contending in the spirit with existing iniquities; it was the sickness of the body of Jewish society from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot in his own times, which moved the prophet's mind, and led him to prophesy so warmly and sometimes so indignantly. But our Lord does not say, *Isaiah prophesied so and so*, and what he said of the men of those days is equally applicable to you; He says, *Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites*,—prophesied of *you*,—so that the

words of the prophet, which in this case had undoubtedly another application much nearer home, could be rightly described as spoken, through the power of the Holy Spirit, of the men of the Lord's time. It gives perhaps an imperfect notion of this prophetic principle to say that the words are adapted or accommodated; it is better to say that this comprehensiveness of meaning is of the essence of divine prophecy, and that in this sense, according to Scripture phrase, the words of prophets are *fulfilled*.

9. *And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition.* 10. *For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:* 11. *But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.* 12. *And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;* 13. *Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.* S. Matt.
xv. 3—9.

In the phrase, *full well ye reject the commandment of God*, we find an instance of severe irony, all the more severe as coming from lips which so seldom adopted such a tone. The phrase is the same as that which occurred in a former verse: *well hath Esaias prophesied*—here the expression is to be taken in its simple meaning: *well ye reject the commandment of God*—here the expression is ironical. The use of such a form of speech perhaps declares the folly and wickedness of the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees more strongly than any serious discussion of the reasons why it deserved to be con-

CHAP.
VII.
9—13.

demned: there was God's commandment on one side, man's tradition on the other—you have chosen the latter—who can doubt your wisdom? who can say that you have not made a holy choice?

Instances of irony are not abundant in Scripture, but there seem to be some. Thus it has been thought that the language attributed to Almighty God on occasion of the fall of man is to be so taken: *behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*—become like his Maker by breaking that Maker's laws.

Observe the manner in which our Lord speaks of Moses: *ye reject the commandment of God...for Moses said*: therefore what Moses said was the commandment of God. Moses was in fact to the children of Israel the voice of God; he came to them in the name of I AM, and the people were bound to hear his words as the words of Him who sent him. The Lord recognizes and supports this authority; He blames the Jews for setting it aside; He calls the commandments given by Moses the commandments of God. How striking is this acknowledgment when taken in connection with the fact, that on one occasion the Lord declared that Moses had given a permission, which was a virtual commandment, because of the hardness of the people's hearts!

Corban.

S. Mark records the original word *Corban*, as he has done in some other places; the introduction of the word is not important, except as an illustration of the Evangelist's style. The nature of the fiction, which our Lord reprobates, has been already described in the commentary upon the parallel passage of S. Matthew; but I will add that the language of our Lord seems to be made somewhat more pointed by S. Mark: *ye suffer him no more to do ought*—as though the feelings of natural affection

rebelled against the fiction, and the tradition of the Scribes and Pharisees not only made a way for some to escape from a duty, but opened a path of iniquity, into which the good were forced by the power of custom in company with the bad.

CHAP.
VII.
9—23.

14. *And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand:* 15. *There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.* 16. *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.* 17. *And when He was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked Him concerning the parable.* 18. *And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; 19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? 20. And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.* S. Matt.
xv. 10—20.

This passage is substantially the same as the parallel one in S. Matthew. There are however a few points of difference which are worthy of notice.

We may observe that S. Mark gives the words of our Lord concerning defilement in a broader form. *There is nothing*, says our Lord, *from without a man, that entering into him can defile him:* the whole principle of pollu-

CHAP.
VII.
14—23.

tion by meat and drink is swept away, and that without even a reference to the old law, which seemed to teach a different doctrine. Our Lord appears to have felt that His doctrine would be regarded as hard by many of His hearers, not hard to understand so much as hard to accept as true and to reconcile with previous divine teaching. Therefore He adds the words, used on several other occasions, *if any man have ears to hear, let him hear*. The possibility of being misunderstood did not deter the Lord from enunciating His great principle with fulness and boldness; and we may learn therefore that there *are* cases, in which doctrines must be declared at any risk, and notwithstanding the probability of their being misunderstood.

The Law
a school-
master.

We see in this teaching of our Lord an illustration of what S. Paul says, that *the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*. The Law, with its regulations of clean and unclean, had had a purpose to serve, and, if the Jews had not abused it, would have served that purpose well; but even if it had not been abused, it was only a shadow of good things to come, and all the formal regulations concerning clean and unclean ceased to have any value, when in the fulness of time Christ taught the true law of uncleanness as connected with the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The things
which defile
a man.

Note that S. Mark is more full than S. Matthew in the catalogue given of evil things which defile a man: he adds, according to the English version, *covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness*. It may be remarked that all these belong to the general class of *evil thoughts*; those *evil things* which S. Matthew and S. Mark record in common are all open actions, *murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts,*

blasphemies; those which S. Mark has added are not so many more sinful actions, but they belong to a different kind of sin.

CHAP.
VII.
14—31.

24. *And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid.* 25. *For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet:* 26. *The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.* 27. *But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.* 28. *And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.* 29. *And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.* 30. *And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.* 31. *And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.*

S. Matt.
xv. 21—29.

This miracle, according to S. Mark's report of it, exhibits very strikingly the two sides of our Saviour's being, the human and the divine. The manner of dealing with the case of possession brought before Him demonstrates the Lord's divine power, as do all other of His miracles; indeed, if preeminence be possible, this is a preeminent instance of that power; it realizes the centurion's conception, which Christ so much commended, *Say in a word and my servant shall be healed*; the healing words are merely these, *Go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter*. Nothing could better illus-

*Eleventh
miracle.*

CHAP.
VII.
24—31.

trate the Lord's power, or His own declaration that He had seen Satan like lightning fall from Heaven. But then, on the other hand, we gather from S. Mark's account that our Saviour was led to perform this great miracle in the most human manner possible, if I may so venture to express myself. He went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon apparently to rest from His ministry: He entered into an house and *would have no man know it*: He desired retirement; He seems to have needed rest, and therefore He betook Himself secretly to a part of the country lying beyond the usual round of His journeys: but though He entered into an house, and wished no one to know it, *He could not be hid*. And so the Lord was, as it were, forced out of His retirement, and compelled by the importunity of a heathen woman to perform a notable miracle.

It may be said that He foresaw the miracle from the first: doubtless He did so: but the task of reconciling such foreknowledge with His desire to be hid is one beyond our powers, and involving the very mystery of our Lord's compound being: we must be content to leave such questions unsolved, and must not diminish the force of expressions which declare the human nature of Christ.

The thirtieth verse may be noted as very characteristic of S. Mark's style. He tells us not only that the girl was healed, but that the mother found her *laid upon the bed*. And this instance of exactness is more especially to be observed, because it shews us that the minuteness of description which characterizes this Gospel is not wholly due to the fact of the narrative having come from an eyewitness; in this case there is no probability that either S. Peter or S. Mark witnessed that

which the Gospel records; no, minuteness of detail belongs to the style of this Evangelist; and it is useful to observe this, because it shews that the inspired writers did not cease to guide human pens when they wrote under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

32. *And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him.* 33. *And they took Him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue;* 34. *And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.* 35. *And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.* 36. *And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;* 37. *And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*

CHAP.
VII.
24—37.

*Twelfth
miracle.
Peculiar to
S. Mark.*

This is one of the two miracles for the report of which we are wholly indebted to this Gospel. It is related with great particularity, and S. Mark gives us (as in some other cases) the very word which Jesus spake when He performed the miracle. In taking that general view of the miracle, which befits the character of this commentary, two points present themselves as chiefly worthy of attention.

In the first place, Jesus took the man aside from the crowd, and afterwards charged him to tell no man of his cure; the act of mercy was therefore what may be called a private one, and all the circumstances of it acquire a peculiar interest from the fact of their having been intended, not as lessons for the public, but as parts of

*The miracle
private.*

CHAP.
VII.
32—37.

a work of mercy in which the suffering man alone was concerned. This consideration leads me to lay stress upon the fact that the Lord did not merely say *Ephphatha*, but also put His fingers into the man's ears and spit and touched his tongue: why did He do this? For the spiritual benefit, I apprehend, of the man himself and his friends. He shewed thereby that mere touch would not do the work required. Christ put His fingers into the man's ears, and they still remained deaf; He spit and touched his tongue, but the impediment of speech remained. It was only when the divine *will* was exerted, and the creative *word* put forth, that the ears were opened, and the string of the tongue loosed, and the powers of speech restored.

The Lord's
sigh.

The other point of especial interest is the Lord's sigh. *Looking up to Heaven, He sighed.* This sigh has been made the subject of an exquisite poem in the *Christian Year*,¹ and I apprehend that the solution of

¹ *Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.*

O'erwhelming thoughts of pain and grief
Over His sinking spirit sweep;—
“What boots it gathering one lost leaf
Out of yon sere and withered heap,
Where souls and bodies, hopes and joys,
All that earth owns or sin destroys,
Under the spurning hoof are cast,
Or tossing in th' autumnal blast?”

The deaf may hear the Saviour's voice,
The fettered tongue its chain may break;
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul, that will not wake,
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven;—
These baffle e'en the spells of Heaven;
In thoughts of these, His brows benign
Not even in healing cloudless shine.

the question there given is not less poetical than true. The performance of a miracle of healing might well bring to the mind of the Saviour the thought of the enormous amount of sickness, both bodily and spiritual, unhealed, and in consequence of human perversity to a great extent unhealable. The explanation is simple; our own poor limited experience of doing good seems to testify of the possibility of sadness of heart arising from such a cause. The only difficulty, if difficulty it be, is to say why Christ did not always sigh when He performed a work of mercy: perhaps He did: certainly He sighed, and more than sighed, at the grave of Lazarus.

CHAP.
VII.
32—37.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAP.
VIII.
1—9.

1. *In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: 3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. 4. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5. And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave*

S. Matt.
xv. 32—39.

CHAP.
VIII.
1—9.

to His disciples to set before them: and they did set them before the people. 7. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away.

*Thirteenth
miracle.*

This second miraculous feeding of a multitude in the wilderness is related by S. Mark almost precisely in the same manner as by S. Matthew; the only difference of any importance being, that S. Matthew mentions the fact that the number was about four thousand, not including the women and children. I shall take the opportunity of making two remarks, which are applicable to both miracles.

*The crea-
tive power
involved in
the miracle.*

The miracles may be said in a certain sense to involve creative power. Any one who believes that the Lord Jesus was the Word of God, by whom all things were made, will perceive that He was only performing what may be called His ordinary work when He supplied food for a multitude; He who supplied bread in the wilderness is the same who makes the earth to bring forth corn and fruits, and who first called the herbs of the field into being. At the same time it should be observed, that there is a broad line of distinction between the multiplication of the loaves and the creation of corn or the causing the herbs to grow in the fields: it was a creation, but a creation of a different kind, an increase of a substance already existing, concerning which we can really say little else but this, that the food was multiplied, and that the multitude eat and were filled.

This character of the miracle has made it one of the most easy for the application of that method of explana-

tion which was some time since devised, but now almost forgotten, for the purpose of reducing the miracles of our Lord to the standard of mere ordinary works of charity. It was said that what our Lord really did was not to multiply the food by miraculous power, but so to move the minds of the multitude that they who had abundance gave to those who had none, and that thus He supplied the wants of all. The explanation will not hold on general grounds, nor can it be reconciled with various distinct statements made concerning this particular miracle; but I have thought it worth noting, because the works of our Lord have had for successive generations very much of that effect, which, according to these foolish interpreters, constituted the whole substance of the miracles. The feeding of the multitude in the wilderness has fed many multitudes since in the very way described. Christ is not here present in the body to feed the poor with miraculous bread; but He has infused such a new spirit into the world, as to ensure an imparting of the rich to the poor, and the supply of the wants of many. Christ is in fact the true feeder of multitudes; and that which He did twice during His life on earth by the power of His creative word, He does now on a much larger scale by the power of His Spirit.

CHAP.
VIII.
1—9.

The effect of the miracle in multiplying the bread of the poor in our own days.

10. *And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.* 11. *And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him.* 12. *And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.* 13. *And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.*

S. Matt.
xv. 39;
xvi. 1—4.

CHAP.
VIII.
10—13.

Magdala
and Dalma-
nutha.

S. Matthew tells us, that after sending away the multitude the Lord and His disciples took ship and came into the coasts of *Magdala*, S. Mark that they came into the parts of *Dalmanutha*. Of Dalmanutha there is now no trace to be found by travellers, and we can only conclude that it was a village in the neighbourhood of Magdala; probably to a person acquainted with the Holy Land in the days of our Lord's life upon earth, *the coasts of Magdala*, and *the parts of Dalmanutha*, would describe the locality equally well. The hypotheses which may be made as to the connection between the Evangelists, implied by such a change of name as this, are manifold and various, and generally of very doubtful validity.

Why the
Lord crossed
and re-
crossed the
Lake.

It will be more profitable to notice, that the four verses, upon which I am now commenting, convey the history of a passage and repassage of the Lake. Our Lord and His disciples go to the parts of Dalmanutha, and apparently soon embark again, and go over to the other side. What was the purpose of this expedition? What did the Lord do in the parts of Dalmanutha? If S. Mark's account be complete, He merely encountered some hardheartedness from the Pharisees, and having sighed deeply over their state of mind left them and departed. They required a sign from Heaven; their demand was, I conceive, founded on the report they had heard of the recent miracle; the discussion recorded in S. John vi., which however arose out of the first miraculous feeding, perhaps explains their demand; they pretended to think that the feeding of a multitude in the wilderness was nothing more than what Moses had done; Messiah must do much more; His character must be attested in some signal manner from Heaven.

What a result from such a miracle! No wonder that the Lord sighed deeply in His spirit, and declared that no sign should be given. He left them, and departed; and so the Saviour of mankind crossed the Lake and re-crossed it again, in order that He might come in contact with the hardheartedness of Pharisees and be caused to sigh.

CHAP.
VIII.
10—21.

14. *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.* 15. *And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.* 16. *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.* 17. *And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?* 18. *Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?* 19. *When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve.* 20. *And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.* 21. *And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?*

S. Matt.
xvi. 5—12.

S. Mark tells us not merely in general as does S. Matthew, that the disciples had *forgotten to take bread*, but more particularly that they had *not more than one loaf* with them; this (I need hardly say) is altogether according to what we have so frequently observed in the style of this Evangelist.

It should be noticed also that in S. Mark's report of the Lord's words, as in that of S. Matthew, the distinction between the two kinds of basket used for collecting

The two
kinds of
basket.

CHAP.
VIII.
14—21.

the fragments in the two miracles of feeding a multitude in the wilderness is carefully preserved.¹

The leaven
of the
Pharisees
and of
Herod.

There is one difference between the reports of the two Evangelists which may give rise to some discussion. S. Matthew represents the Lord as speaking of the leaven of the *Pharisees and Sadducees*, S. Mark of the leaven of the *Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod*: what did our Lord mean by the leaven of Herod? Some have thought that He intended by this expression, as by the other concerning the Pharisees, to warn the disciples against hypocrisy: and they have explained this by saying, that Herod was at the same time paying court to the Jews and to the Roman Emperor for the sake of his crown, and that he and his party (of whom we seem to get a glimpse under the name of *Herodians*) were thus the type of men, who would adopt any religion or no religion for the sake of worldly advantage. May it not possibly be, that the name of Herod was intended to stand for the court of Herod, with all the pomp and pleasure and worldliness that belonged to it? May not the Pharisees stand for wickedness under the cloak of religion, Herod for wickedness in the form of the world and the flesh? And if so, may we not get a hint that the disciples of Christ have ever these two dangers to avoid? hypocrisy on the one side, worldliness on the other; and do we not see, as a matter of fact, that what is called the religious world is ever expressing its horror of worldliness; and that worldly people on the other side comfort themselves by talking of the abominable character of religious hypocrisy, and congratulating themselves that they are at least free from this?

Hypocrisy
and world-
liness.

Note, before leaving this passage, that it was the

¹ See note upon S. Matthew xvi. 10.

disciples who had forgotten to take bread.¹ Our Lord then did not concern Himself with these matters: so when the woman of Samaria found Him resting by Himself at the well, it was because *the disciples* had gone away to buy meat. The meat and drink of Christ were such as could never be forgotten or left behind.

CHAP.
VIII.
14—26.

22. *And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him.* 23. *And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought.* 24. *And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.* 25. *After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.* 26. *And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.*

Fourteenth
miracle.
Peculiar to
S. Mark.

Another miracle peculiar to this Gospel. It offers several points for consideration.

The most notable feature of it, that in which it differs from every other miracle which Jesus wrought, is the gradual character of the cure. Interpreters have discussed much the reason of this, and some have attributed it to the spiritual condition of the blind man himself, some have sought it rather in the purpose of our Lord. It is certainly gratuitous to assume that there was any want of faith on the part of the man, and we might have expected that had this been so, the miracle would have been rendered impossible rather

Gradual
character of
the miracle.

¹ The word *disciples*, which is supplied in the English version, is not in the original, but is manifestly implied. In the parallel place of S. Matthew the word is given.

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22—26.

than gradual. It seems to me the wiser course to enquire what lesson may be learnt from the Lord's conduct, assuming that in this as in every other case He did all things well. And this lesson, I think, we certainly may gather, namely, that the works which Christ performs upon the spirits of men are not the less miraculous, nor the less genuine, because they are gradual: there may be growth of spiritual discernment, as there was growth of this man's power of seeing, and the growth may nevertheless be not a mere natural development, but a gift proceeding direct from the creating power of Christ. Men are too apt to confine the works of God within limits of their own devising; but as in nature there is scarcely any kind of growth, however widely divergent from the ordinary rule, of which instances may not be found, so in grace there are divers kinds of experience, and no one has a right to lay it down as a rule, that the dealings of God with his neighbour are precisely like the dealings of God with himself.

The miracle
private.

This miracle is one of those which may be described as *private* miracles. The Lord took the blind man out of the town, and when He had completed the cure, He bid him go, not into the town, that is, into Bethsaida, but to his own house, and not to tell it to any in the town; whence it appears incidentally that the blind man did not belong to Bethsaida; he was to go home, but not to go there; and the command laid upon him was apparently not entire silence concerning the miracle, but silence so far as Bethsaida was concerned. Why was this? Here again we are compelled to take upon trust the wisdom and propriety of our Lord's command; but it cannot fail to strike us, that there must have been some very special reason. Bethsaida was not

without its miracle; on the other hand, it was one of those places which received a special *woe*, because it had neglected the mighty works done within it; is it possible that its time had now expired, and that the things which belonged to its peace were now hidden from its eyes?¹

27. *And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Cesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?* 28. *And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.* 29. *And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?* *And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ.* 30. *And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.*

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22—30.

S. Matt.
xvi. 13—20.
S. Luke
ix. 18—22.

I have remarked in my commentary upon the parallel passage of S. Matthew, the incidental manner in which this very important conversation between our Lord and His disciples took place; *by the way He asked His disciples.* The manner of its introduction is especially notable, because of the importance of it as a portion of the history. It is (so to speak) the turning point; and the confession of S. Peter seems to have put our Lord henceforth upon new terms with His disciples. Finding that their faith was sound upon the great point of His own being and character, He was able to lead them on to truths which they had never suspected before, and to shew them that Christ must suffer many things and be rejected and killed. Viewing this passage as the turning point of the history, it is perhaps not unworthy of observation, that we are now as nearly as may be in the centre of S. Mark's Gospel.

S. Peter's
confession
the centre
of the
Gospel.

¹ It is a question, however, which of the two Bethsaidas this was.

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27—30.

The blessing to
S. Peter
omitted by
S. Mark.

The chief point which strikes us in comparing the account given in this Gospel with that given by S. Matthew, is the omission of the blessing given to S. Peter: an omission which it is impossible not to deem of great significance, if (as I have everywhere assumed) S. Peter be really the author of S. Mark's Gospel. How are we to account for it? We may perhaps compare it with the omission of the history of his walking on the water, and we may say that in his ordinary teaching S. Peter shrank from reporting words of our Lord which appeared to raise him so much above his brethren, and which in his mouth would imply that he valued himself much upon the distinction. I can easily believe that S. Peter could seldom bring himself to repeat words of such unparalleled greatness; we shall see presently that he did report the other words of our Lord which were words of unparalleled rebuke. If this be the right solution of the difficulty, it throws much light upon the apostolic character, and shews how well S. Peter had learned the lesson of humility which our Lord so often enforced; but it also shews how very much that lesson of humility has been forgotten by many of those, who have professed themselves to be the true successors of S. Peter, and have claimed a supremacy over their brethren in virtue of our Lord's words.

S. Matt.
xvi. 21—23.

31. *And He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.* 32. *And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him.* 33. *But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying,*

Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

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31—33.

In after-days S. Peter must have been much amazed at the presumption of his conduct towards the Lord upon this occasion. But we may be thankful that no feeling of shame prevented him from recording the circumstances, and so leaving a lesson behind him for other disciples, who may feel tempted to presume upon their privileges and so lose their humility. S. Paul speaks of a thorn in the flesh being sent to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations which he received; and so in the case of S. Peter, the special revelation made to him of the glory of Christ in the Mount of Transfiguration, and the prominent place which he had just been permitted to occupy in answering the question of the Lord, *Whom say ye that I am?* seem to have been too much for his humility, and to have caused him to receive a very severe rebuke.

The rebuke
of S. Peter.

S. Mark adds one little sentence to the account which we have in S. Matthew, and perhaps throws thereby some light upon S. Peter's conduct. He tells us that our Lord *spake that saying openly*; that is, He made no secret of the sufferings which He was about to undergo, and the rejection with which He was about to meet; and from the way in which S. Mark tells us this, I think we may conclude that it was the plain open undisguised character of our Lord's declaration concerning Himself, which chiefly offended S. Peter. He would have the feeling probably, that if such misfortunes were in store, they were at least not things to be talked of to all the disciples; such a course would dispirit them; if the Lord felt anxious about

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31—38.

the future success of His mission, it would be better to talk over His fears to himself and James and John, and not run the risk of His misgivings becoming generally known. And so Peter took the Lord aside and rebuked Him; but the Lord, as we are expressly told, *turned about and looked on His disciples*, and then rebuked Peter; He had no secret communications for Peter; what He said to one He said to them all; Peter did Him little justice in supposing that He was discouraged and out of heart; He knew what was coming and that it was all part of His redeeming work, and now was the time for making it known. The disciples had all confessed through Peter that Jesus was Christ; and therefore now they were all fit to hear that He must suffer and be rejected of men.

S. Matt.
xvi. 24—27.
S. Luke
ix. 23—26.

34. *And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* 35. *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it.* 36. *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* 37. *Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* 38. *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels.*

Did the
people
understand
our Lord's
words?

These words were not intended to be of private interpretation, for Christ spoke them not to His disciples only, but to *the people*, whom He called to Him for the purpose. Could the words have been entirely understood at the time by those who heard them?

could they thoroughly enter into the meaning of *taking up their cross and following Him*? I should conceive that the Lord's hearers would understand that complete devotion to Him was needful, so that even if crucifixion stared them in the face they must not shrink; but I should think also, that they hardly realized that, which even the Apostles themselves found it difficult to believe, namely, that they were to follow One, who was not only to be crucified with shame, but whose crucifixion was to be the ground of His disciples' preaching and His disciples' boast.

But however much or however little of the Lord's meaning was taken in by His hearers at the time, this we may say concerning the solemn declaration made on this occasion, that it contained the fundamental principle of the preaching of the Gospel to the world. Our Lord knew from the beginning the opposition with which His Church would meet; He knew that His own cross was the very type and symbol of the whole history of the preaching of the Gospel, that the Gospel would raise up in active and most malevolent opposition all the powers of sin the world and the devil, and that it was only by suffering that He Himself, or His disciples after Him, could gain the victory. What a wonderful truth! how painful to the Apostles to realize! how completely in accordance with that which took place afterwards!

And no doubt the words of our Lord upon this occasion were words frequently in the mouths of early apostles and martyrs. It was the words, *What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul*, that sent Francis Xavier upon his wonderful missionary labours; and doubtless the simple force

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34—38.

of such words, and the full belief that the Son of Man would come one day *in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels*, and reward those who had not been ashamed of Him, were a tower of strength to simple faithful followers of Christ, from which no power of men or devils could expel them. What could persecutors do with those, who looked thus beyond the misery of the present to the glories of the future? and what can the temptations of the world do with us, if we in like manner look beyond present pleasure and advantage to the restitution of all things, when the Son of Man will be revealed?

CHAP.
IX.
1—8.

CHAPTER IX.

S. Matt.
xvi. 28;
xvii. 1—8.
S. Luke
ix. 27—35.

1. *And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.* 2. *And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them.* 3. *And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.* 4. *And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.* 5. *And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one*

for Elias. 6. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him. 8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

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1—8.

The history of the Transfiguration here given is almost identical with that given by S. Matthew; in comparing the two we may however note the little sentence peculiar to S. Mark, *so as no fuller on earth can white them*, not so much because this description adds much to the history, as because it is characteristic of this Evangelist. There can hardly be any question that the account of the transfiguration, as given by S. Mark, is that, from which S. Matthew derived his; S. Peter was one of the three witnesses of the wonderful scene, and neither of the other two (as far as we know) recorded it; S. Peter therefore is the real authority for the history, and in the Gospel of S. Mark we find, as I have so frequently remarked, the testimony of S. Peter himself.

The Trans-
figuration.

It may perhaps be worth while to observe, that they who divided the Gospels into chapters have made a singular difference between the division of subject in this Gospel and that adopted in S. Matthew's. In S. Matthew's, the verse, in which our Lord speaks of some of those standing with Him who should not taste of death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, appears to belong to the discourse which precedes it, and to be separated from the history of the transfiguration by being made to close a chapter. In S. Mark's the same verse is separated from the discourse alluded to by the arbitrary division of the chapter, and

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1—8.

made the commencement of the story of the transfiguration. It would seem from this, that they who divided S. Mark's Gospel believed that there was a connection between the promise of seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, and the revelation of the Son of Man in glory which followed. Is this so, or is it not?

The kingdom of God coming with power.

I am disposed to think that the division in S. Matthew and that in S. Mark may each have a portion of the truth. Doubtless the promise of Christ was not exhausted by the transfiguration; and yet that event seems so to mark the beginning of the coming of the kingdom of God with power, that I can believe that our Lord intended His disciples to see in it a reference to His promise lately given. It formed a new epoch in Gospel history, and was the first foreshadowing of that complete revelation of the Son of Man as the judge of quick and dead, which is to take place hereafter. Observe, with reference to this commencement of a new epoch, that we have (as before remarked) completed the first half of S. Mark's Gospel.

S. Matt.
xvii. 9—13.
S. Luke
ix. 36.

9. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of Man were risen from the dead.* 10. *And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* 11. *And they asked Him, saying, Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come?* 12. *And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought.* 13. *But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.*

The rising from the dead, of which the Lord spoke to the three disciples, was a source of great perplexity to their minds. It was not that the notion of a resurrection was new and strange to them, for the Jews generally believed this; and in particular we may call to mind, that, when Jesus told Martha that her brother Lazarus should rise again, she replied at once that she knew her brother should rise again at the last day. The difficulty was to connect their ordinary belief in a resurrection with those things which their Master had told them to connect with it; how could they keep the scene of the transfiguration a secret until after the resurrection, if that resurrection were what they, as orthodox Jews, believed it to be? and yet of what other resurrection could the Lord speak? I suspect that their partial knowledge of truth helped in this instance to add to their difficulties; and indeed nothing but the actual witnessing of the event could have made them completely to understand *what the rising from the dead should mean*.

The answer of our Lord to the question concerning Elias is given more fully by S. Mark than by S. Matthew, and may be made more striking than it appears in our English version, if we regard the latter part of the twelfth verse as a question, which it most probably was. *How is it written?* How do you account for the fact, that, notwithstanding this restoration of all things by Elias, it should nevertheless be written of Messiah, that He should be a sufferer and should be made of no account, utterly disregarded and despised? Here indeed was the difficulty, which all expectants of the Messiah had to conquer; there were prophecies of the restoration of all things, there were prophecies not less

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IX.
9—13.

Difficulty
of the dis-
ciples con-
cerning the
resurrection.

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9—15.

clear of contempt and rejection: the Scribes were willing to take the first, they were unwilling to accept the second: like many others they wished to read the Scriptures in their own way, and to reject what they could not reconcile with their own theories. Nor was it easy for men, who lived before the coming of Messiah, to twine all the threads of prophecy into one uniform and consistent string; but also it was not required of them that they should; the fault of the Scribes and those who followed them was I apprehend this, that they would not open their eyes to receive the light when it came. Who could be more ignorant, more gross in their conceptions, than the disciples? Yet they followed Jesus, because they loved Him; and so they were led by degrees to understand mysteries, and to see how all Scripture centered in Him and in Him was fulfilled.

S. Matt.
xvii. 14.
S. Luke
ix. 37.

14. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the Scribes questioning with them.* 15. *And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.*

*Fifteenth
miracle.*

The history of the cure of the child, who had been brought ineffectually to the disciples while the Lord was in the Mount, is given by each of the first three Evangelists, and as usual with most minuteness by S. Mark. Some of the particulars which S. Mark supplies will afford matter for comment.

*The Scribes
questioning
with the
disciples.*

S. Mark tells us, that our Lord found *the Scribes* questioning with His disciples; a fact which is worth noticing, because it indicates, that the failure of the disciples in their attempt to perform a miracle had created a considerable stir in what may be called the religious world. It was not merely that the father of the child,

and those who happened to witness his application to the Apostles, were disappointed, but that the news of the failure had soon reached the ears of the leaders of the people in religious matters; and the failure was looked upon as a new fact in the case, an evidence of the kind for which they had long been seeking against the claims of the Lord Jesus.

The *people*, I apprehend, were still on the side of the disciples and their Master; and so, when they saw Him coming to them again, they were overjoyed, and *running to Him saluted Him*. They had been trembling perhaps lest the Scribes should get the better of the disciples in the argument; certainly for the moment the advantage seemed to be on their side; but as soon as they saw Christ again all their anxiety vanished; His calm, dignified, gentle face reassured them; and they were confident that He could explain everything, and could deliver themselves and His disciples from their perplexity. Yet we read that they were *greatly amazed*: the word so translated expresses *fear, alarm*; what could they fear? It may be, that the Evangelist intends to express that the tumult was hushed, and the hearts of the people awed by the sudden arrival of Christ amongst them; or it may be, that something of the divine glory still remained, and that the visage of Christ was to such an extent changed for the time, like that of Moses when he returned from the Mount, as to produce an effect, which they could scarcely explain themselves, upon the minds of those who saw Him. We read, on other occasions, of *fear* and great *joy* being emotions excited by our Lord's presence; and perhaps we may learn this at least from S. Mark's words, that the joy excited by the presence of Christ is

CHAP. different from mere worldly joy, and is then safest and
IX. best when it is accompanied by godly fear.
16—24.

S. Matt.
xvii. 14—17.
S. Luke
ix. 38—41.

16. *And He asked the Scribes, What question ye with them?* 17. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;* 18. *And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.* 19. *He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me.* 20. *And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.* 21. *And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.* 22. *And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.* 23. *Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* 24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.*

The ques-
tioning of
Scribes.

Our Lord gives the Scribes the opportunity of stating their own case; no doubt they had some knotty question concerning the Law, or the traditions of the elders, which they wished to be solved; and Christ would assist His disciples in unravelling the difficulty. But we see very clearly the difference between the questionings of Scribes and the real pressure of spiritual distress, in the manner, in which the man in the crowd contrives by his quickness to take the reply out of the mouth of the Scribes. They were discussing why it was that the dis-

ciples, who had done so many other works, had failed here; the man himself cares little about the reason of failure, he is only concerned with the fact; his son is grievously tormented, and the disciples cannot set him free from his torment. Can Jesus Christ Himself? That is the great question, which exercises the father's heart.

The variety of ways, in which the infirmity of the afflicted child is described, is worthy of attention. According to S. Matthew, we find the father saying, *He is lunatic and sore vexed*, and in the after part of the story we read of the Lord *rebuking the devil*. According to S. Mark, the father says that his son has a *dumb spirit*, and afterwards Christ rebukes *the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him*. According to S. Luke, the father says of his son, that *a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out*; and afterwards we read, that *the devil threw him down and tare him*, and that *Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit*. This appears therefore to have been a true case of demoniacal possession, and yet we find S. Matthew speaking of the boy as being *lunatic*; from which I think we may conclude as much as this, that we must not fancy that the Evangelists were always scientifically strict in their phraseology concerning spiritual maladies; and therefore we must not hope to clear up completely the very difficult subject of demoniacal possession by examination of the Evangelists' words.

The conversation between our Lord and the father is peculiar to S. Mark, and very beautiful. Jesus talks kindly about the affliction; brings out the man's faith, makes the healing a religious lesson to the parent as much as a boon to the child, and teaches us in the most emphatic manner that it is possible, by our faith,

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IX.
16—24.

The malady
of the child
as described
by the
several
Evangelists.

CHAP. to obtain blessings for those, who are unable to ask them
IX. for themselves.

25—29.

S. Matt.
xvii. 18—21.
S. Luke
ix. 42.

25. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.* 26. *And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.* 27. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.* 28. *And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out?* 29. *And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

The Lord having produced the right condition of heart in the father of the child, delays no longer to work the miracle. *Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.* The condition of mind evinced by these words, even the apparent contradiction which they contain, proving as it did that the father's faith had not taken away his humility, were a proper preparation for the performance of a work so great and difficult as this seems to have been. Moreover the people began to crowd round; and the Lord was perhaps anxious to avoid any additional display of His power, and therefore He did not defer to speak the word of command.

The word
of command
to the un-
clean spirit.

And I remark upon the word of command, not only because it is much more fully reported by S. Mark than by either S. Matthew or S. Luke, but because it is very striking in itself. It indicates a completeness of healing, which must have been very comforting to the afflicted child and his father, and may be comforting to ourselves. Christ charges the spirit not merely to

come out of the child, but *not to enter into him again*; and so He delivers the afflicted one, not only from present pain, but from future anxiety. Many of our deliverances from evil, it is to be feared, are not of this complete and final character; but at least it is well to know that such deliverances are not beyond Christ's power, to question whether they would not always be of this kind if not interfered with by human sinfulness, and to look forward with hope to that time, when deliverance from evil shall be complete, and when all that separates us from God shall be banished from our hearts, never to enter into them again.

The cure was not effected without a severe struggle. The spirit rent him sore; the child fell down as one dead; many in fact thought that he was dead; but Jesus lifted him gently by the hand, and he arose. May we not see in this a hint, that evil spirits, which cannot be cast out but by prayer and fasting, will only leave us with extreme difficulty, and well-nigh kill us in the act of departure? It is the very character of evil, that it by degrees takes possession of the whole being, and becomes a part of the man's self, so that to get rid of it is like wrenching soul and body asunder; and when it *is* got rid of by prayer and fasting, or such like severe discipline, many say he *is* dead; he is such an altered man, his tastes so changed, his thoughts so different: but what of that? Jesus will take him by the hand, and shew that he is not dead, but in reality is restored to life.

30. *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee: and He would not that any man should know it.* 31. *For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of*

CHAP.
IX.
25—29.

The struggle of deliverance.

S. Matt.
xvii. 22, 23.
S. Luke
ix. 43—45.

CHAP. *men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is*
 IX. *killed, He shall rise the third day. 32. But they under-*
 30—32. *stood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*

Prominence
 given to the
 Lord's
 teaching
 concerning
 His suf-
 ferings.

S. Mark gives a more prominent place to this teaching of our Lord concerning His approaching sufferings and death and resurrection, than either S. Matthew or S. Luke. These two Evangelists give us substantially the same account of what Christ said; but S. Mark adds that the journey through Galilee was kept secret, in order that He might have the opportunity of instructing His disciples on the awful future, which was now approaching. So at least I understand the Evangelist, when he says that Christ *would not that any man should know it, for He taught His disciples*. It is impossible not to remark the place which this special teaching occupies; it is impossible, I mean, not to observe, that it follows immediately upon the great revelation of divine glory on the Mount of Transfiguration; it was in fact the glory, revealed during that exaltation, that gave the chief importance and meaning to the declaration of sufferings and death, which the Lord made after His return to the level of this world and to the society of men. He who is declared to be the Son of God by a voice from Heaven, is He, who as the Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men and to be crucified and slain.

Observe also the lesson, which is to be learned from the importance assigned by our Lord to the duty of instructing His Apostles. His general work was that of doing good to the people, healing their sicknesses, and instructing their ignorance, leading them towards the kingdom of Heaven; but He will not allow this great work to interfere with one of a more quiet yet not

less important kind. His Apostles must be taught: they must learn the mysteries of His kingdom in order that they may teach others; and the importance assigned by our Lord to this work may perhaps be a hint to His ministers in these days, not to allow the work of their open and public ministrations to interfere with private study and their own religious improvement: sometimes they must retire from the multitude, that they too may be instructed of Christ.

Christ taught His disciples, and yet they did not understand Him. He spoke of His death and His resurrection, and they understood neither the one nor the other. But His work was not thrown away; a time came, when they did understand; and then His old lessons, which seemed dark at the time, started up into new life and light, and their hearts were encouraged, and their faith confirmed.

33. *And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35. And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. 36. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, 37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.*

S. Matt.
xviii. 1—6.
S. Luke
ix. 46—48.

It was on the occasion of this arrival at Capernaum that the incident of the tribute-money, and the commission to Peter to pay it by means of a coin found

The story
of the
tribute-
money omit-
ted by
S. Mark.

CHAP.
IX.
33—37.

in a fish's mouth, occurred. Seeing that S. Peter was the chief actor in this miraculous transaction, we might perhaps have expected to find the history of it in S. Mark rather than any other of the Evangelists; but the omission is quite of a piece with that of the history of the walking on the water, and of the signal blessing pronounced on the occasion of S. Peter's great confession. We should in common language say, that a disciple might have been *proud* to have been treated by his master as S. Peter was, when Christ said to him, *that take and give for thee and Me*; and this may be the very reason why S. Peter in his teaching laid little stress upon it, or altogether passed it by.

The rebuke
of ambition
not omitted.

The story of the tribute-money is omitted, that of the dispute for precedence is given most fully. The latter illustrated the weakness of the disciples, and on that very account they wished to publish it, although (humanly speaking) it might easily have been concealed. It was when they were *in the house*, that the Lord called them to account for their foolish dispute by the way. We may very well believe, that by reserving His censure for a private interview He intended to spare their feelings; and we may add that a censure given so gently, so delicately, so kindly, would certainly have a tenfold force; but, although it was given thus privately, the Apostles would not keep the benefit of it to themselves; what they thus had heard in the closet they would proclaim upon the housetops, in order that their brethren, having the same infirmities, might have the benefit of the rebuke.

The ambition of the disciples connected with the prophecy of the Lord's sufferings.

It is a striking fact that this dispute for precedence should have taken place in immediate connection with a declaration of the Lord's sufferings. The explanation

is perhaps this. The Lord had finished the prophecy of His sufferings with the declaration that He should *rise again*: the disciples did not know what this meant, and they feared to ask Him; but they probably imagined that it at least pointed to a speedy termination of their Master's humiliation, and an entrance upon His glory; hence their carnal minds at once jumped to the thought of personal greatness; they did not know that they must suffer and die with Christ, in order that they might be great in His kingdom.

S. Mark gives the lesson concerning humility much more fully than S. Matthew; but there is only one additional circumstance to which I shall call attention. S. Matthew tells us that our Lord *called a little child and set him in the midst of them*; S. Mark adds that He *took him up in His arms*; the lesson given is the same, but it becomes more emphatic when we think upon Christ as giving it, not with the child standing before Him, but carrying the child gently in His own arms.

38. *And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.*

S. Luke
ix. 49, 50.

39. *But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me.* 40. *For he that is not against us is on our part.*

The connection of these verses with the context is not free from obscurity. Some have thought that S. John said what he did, because, after hearing the humility of a little child so highly extolled, he began to doubt whether the conduct of himself and his fellows, in the matter to which he referred, had been as humble

The man
forbidden by
the disciples
to cast out
devils in
Christ's
name.

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38—40.

as it should have been. Others imagine that the connecting link is the words *in My Name*; the Lord had spoken of receiving children *in His Name*; had the Apostles then done right in forbidding one, who was doing a miracle *in His Name*? And some have thought that the remark of S. John does not really belong to the place in which S. Mark has put it; but this is an hypothesis which we should be slow to adopt; the very difficulty arising from the apparent want of connection makes it probable, that S. Mark would not have inserted it here, unless this had been its true place. When men are discussing some matter in which they are deeply interested, who shall undertake to say what is the train of thought that suggests each individual remark? How often there is in reality a connection in the mind of the person who makes it, which does not readily present itself to any one but himself. And so there may have been many reasons why S. John should have introduced this subject of the man casting out devils, which we cannot now easily trace.

However this may be, the important point is, that the Lord desired the disciples not to rebuke men under such circumstances. Might we not have anticipated His decision? In the great battle between the kingdom of God and the powers of Satan, surely the services of volunteers were not to be refused. If a man could cast out a devil in the name of Christ, that might be taken as in itself a sufficient proof of his faith and allegiance. The decision could not be intended to apply only to the literal case of men casting out devils; it must have a wider application: and it teaches us to be very tolerant of those, who fight on Christ's side, and who yet follow not us. But is this a general

license for dissent? Does it make schism impossible? Is there no possibility of rending the body of Christ? I conceive that this would be a wrong conclusion: Christ founded one Church, and established one baptism, and He would not have blamed the advice of His Apostle, to mark those who cause divisions, and to avoid them.

41. *For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.* 42. *And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.* 43. *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:* 44. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* 45. *And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:* 46. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* 47. *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire;* 48. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

Commentators have discussed much the nature of the connection of the first of these verses with those that precede. Some have come to the conclusion, that the words were in reality not spoken upon this occasion at all; and it is certainly in favour of this latter view that S. Matthew gives the words in a different connection, making them the conclusion of the address given by the Lord to His Apostles, when He sent them

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38—48.

S. Matt.

x. 42;

xviii. 6—9.

S. Luke

xvii. 2.

Connection
of the verses
with the
context.

S. Matt.

x. 42.

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41—48.

upon their first mission. I do not feel sure, however, that any such supposition is necessary; and I think that the connection is sufficiently clear, if we regard the passage, which contains S. John's question concerning one who cast out devils and the answer to it, (that is, verses 38—40,) as a parenthesis. If we do this, we shall have to seek the context for the forty-first verse, not in that which immediately precedes it, but in the thirty-seventh verse; we must suppose that S. John thrust in his question upon our Lord's discourse, as he seems to have done, for some reason which it matters not here to determine, and that our Lord, when He had answered him, recurred to His old subject. Observe how the passage will then run. *Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My Name, receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose His reward.* In this way all seems orderly and intelligible.

S. Mark gives the warning concerning the millstone, which would be a slighter burden than the curse incurred by offending the little ones, in nearly the same manner as S. Matthew; but the rest of the discourse he has recorded much more fully and strongly. Notice especially the emphasis of the words, which occur three times, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* The words are quoted from the prophet Isaiah, and occur in his book with peculiar force as being a portion of the concluding verse; but they are lifted by our Lord far above their apparent meaning, as they stand in Isaiah's prophecy; or rather perhaps it should be said, that we may judge of the

real elevation of that prophecy by observing how our Lord has applied the words. The Lord has stamped His own seal upon Isaiah's words, and has given us His own infallible authority for asserting, that there is a hell into which human spirits may fall, and in which the condition of human spirits can be rightly described under the figure of an unquenchable fire and an undying worm.

49. *For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.* 50. *Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*

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41—50.

S. Matt.
v. 13.
S. Luke
xiv. 34.

No one can read these verses without being sensible of their obscurity, or rather of the obscurity of the former verse in itself, and of the latter from its connection with the former. I shall make such remarks as seem to me helpful in rendering the passage intelligible, without venturing to hope that the difficulty will be all removed.

The sacrifice salted with salt.
Difficulty of the passage.

With regard to the second verse, some commentators have suspected that it was not spoken in the connection in which we now find it. This, as we have seen, is a common way of getting over a difficulty: but it must be admitted that the opinion is supported by the fact, that we meet with nearly the same words in a different connection in S. Matthew v. 13, and again in a still different one in S. Luke xiv. 34. I am not sure, however, that this reason is conclusive; it seems possible that the comparison of salt losing its savour may have been, if I may so express myself with reverence, a favourite one with our Lord, that He may have used it several times and in different connections, and that

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49, 50.

here the reference to salt in the forty-ninth verse may have suggested the application of a figure, which the disciples had heard from the Lord's lips on other occasions, and which would on that very account affect their minds the more.

This, however, seems certain, that in endeavouring to understand the verses, the two must be considered apart, and then the difficulty attaches itself almost entirely to the former. In the elucidation of it, it is to be observed that reference is clearly made to the Levitical law, according to which every offering was to be offered with salt; and it is further to be observed, that the *and* between the two clauses of the verse has probably the sense of *as*, or *even as*; so that the verse would run thus, *Every one shall be salted with fire, even as every sacrifice shall be salted with salt*. Further it seems probable that the phrase *every one* refers to what the Lord has already spoken, *every one* of the persons to whom He has been alluding as those whose *fire is not quenched*: as though He had said, *Do not be surprised that I speak of fire, for every one of those who do not enter into the kingdom of God shall be salted with fire*: they are in a certain sense *sacrifices* too; not living sacrifices in this world, but men who having transgressed against the Lord must be consumed, and must become *an abhorring unto all flesh*. And lastly, when the Lord speaks of salt having lost its saltiness, He seems to recognize the fact, that there may be and is, in the judgment of God, a fire which will be able to consume, when it has no power to purify.

Isaiah
lxvi. 24.

CHAPTER X.

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X.

1—12.

1. *And He arose from thence,¹ and cometh into the coasts of Judea, by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again.* 2. *And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him.* 3. *And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?* 4. *And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.* 5. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.* 6. *But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.* 7. *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;* 8. *And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.* 9. *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* 10. *And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter.* 11. *And He said unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.* 12. *And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*

S. Matt.
xix. 1—9.S. Luke
xvi. 18.

The conversation of our Lord with the Pharisees respecting divorce is given substantially in the same form

The ques-
tion of
divorce.

¹ "Here is need of a discerning eye, to distinguish of the true time, and method of this story, and of Christ's journey. If you make use of such an eye, you will find half-a-year or thereabouts to come between

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by S. Matthew and S. Mark.¹ The chief distinction is this, that whereas in the former Evangelist we find our Lord, in speaking of the unlawfulness of putting away a wife, throwing in the parenthesis, *except it be for fornication*, we do not find any such qualification introduced in the latter. The question has consequently been raised, which of the evangelical reports is to be taken as ruling the meaning of the other? are we to suppose that S. Mark omitted an important restriction of the generality of our Lord's decision; or are we to regard his omission of the exception recorded by S. Matthew as indicating, that we do not rightly understand that exception, if we take it in its obvious sense?

To me I confess there seems to be no reasonable ground of doubt. S. Mark appears to have omitted only that, which it might be supposed that every one would supply; whether after separation for the cause of unfaithfulness to the marriage vow parties should be per-

the uttering the words immediately before going, and this travail of our Saviour: however it seems to be intimated by our Evangelist, and likewise by Matthew, that when He had finished these words, forthwith He entered upon His journey: when in truth He went before to Jerusalem, through the midst of Samaria, to the Feast of Tabernacles, Luke ix. 51, &c.; John vii. And again from Galilee, after He had returned thither, through the cities and towns, to Jerusalem, Luke xiii. 22, to the Feast of Tabernacles, John x. 22. And again beyond Jordan indeed, John x. 40, but first taking His way into Galilee, and thence beyond Jordan, according to that story which is before us."—LIGHTFOOT.

¹ But compare verses 3, 4, 5 with the parallel verses in S. Matthew xix. 7, 8, 9, and observe that, whereas our Evangelist represents the Lord as referring to Moses, according to the other the reference is made by the Pharisees: this is a difference of no moment, but it proves that the two accounts are independent of each other. Observe, in like manner, that the saying of our Lord contained in verse 11, which in S. Mark is spoken to the disciples in the house, would seem from S. Matthew, xix. 9, to have been spoken in public to the Pharisees.

mitted to marry again is not so clear, but that unfaithfulness is a sufficient ground for separation appears to be dictated by the laws of nature; and I apprehend that our Lord did but express an exception to the general law of marriage, which the very nature of the marriage bond both implies and justifies.

The question concerning marriage was one introduced by the Pharisees. They came *tempting Him*. The question which they put was one debated in their schools, one great division of their learned men taking one side, and another the other side; and it was therefore a very good test of the pretensions of any new teacher. How does our Lord solve the difficulty? By going beyond all the school arguments of the Scribes, and looking at the original act of God. *He* celebrated the first marriage. What did *He* mean when He made Adam and Eve one flesh? What was the *idea* of marriage, as indicated by that primæval wedding, in which God Himself was both father and priest?

Yet the subject was evidently one which puzzled the people of those days; we see this from a little fact, which S. Mark after his manner has preserved for us. *In the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter*. It was not merely a wicked mischief-making question on the part of the Pharisees; it was one which troubled the disciples as well; and they did what was very wise, namely, waited until they were with Christ alone, and then asked Him to enlighten their minds.

13. *And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them.* 14. *But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not:*

S. Matt.
xix. 13—15.
S. Luke
xviii. 15—17.

CHAP. *for of such is the kingdom of God.* 15. *Verily I say*
 X. *unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of*
 13—16. *God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* 16.
And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon
them, and blessed them.

Christ
 blessing
 little child-
 ren.

S. Mark's report of this most interesting scene in our Saviour's life, is the one chosen by the Church of England for the lesson read to the people on the occasion of the public baptism of infants. On comparing it with the reports given by S. Matthew and S. Luke, we may easily perceive that it is rightly chosen; it is the fullest and most minute of the three. There are however only two additional circumstances given, but both of these are interesting.

Infant
 Baptism
 implied.

In the first place, S. Mark tells us that when the Lord saw the disciples rebuking those who brought the little children, *He was much displeased*. They might possibly fancy that they were consulting His dignity, or His comfort; but they were certainly shewing a glaring ignorance of His true character and His real wishes. The Lord's displeasure indicates, I conceive, disappointment at the spiritual state of His disciples, grief that having heard His teaching so long they had not understood it better. He had never yet said, in so many words, "I am willing to bless little children;" but the spirit of His ministry implied it. And in like manner, though the Scripture nowhere says, "Bring your little children to holy baptism," I think the spirit of Scripture is so clear, that Christ may well be displeased with those who forbid them to be brought.

The other addition made by S. Mark is in the description of our Lord's conduct towards these children. He tells us that the Lord not only put His hands upon

them and blessed them, but that *He took them up in His arms*. The action indicated gentleness of heart and true human affection;¹ He laid His hands upon the children and blessed them as a priest, He took them up in His arms as an elder brother of the same family. His blessing was not a cold ministerial act, but one of true human love. Who could doubt, after seeing Christ's conduct, what His real feeling towards little children was?

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13—16.

One other point may be noticed as distinguishing S. Mark from S. Matthew, though it is not an addition. S. Matthew tells us that the children were brought to Christ, that He might *put His hands on them and pray*; S. Mark, that He might *touch them*. What does the comparison of the expressions teach us? I think it may fairly suggest, that in the dispensation of Christ outward and visible signs have inward and spiritual grace attached to them. To speak of Christ *touching* was the same thing as to speak of Christ *praying*; and so, when persons speak of the participation of the Lord's sacraments with warmth and earnestness, they may seem to speak of that which is outward, and yet they mean that which is not outward at all, but which brings them spiritually very near to Christ.

Outward
signs and
inward
grace.

17. *And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* 18. *And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.*²

S. Matt.
xix. 16—22.
S. Luke
xviii. 18—23.

¹ Attention has already been called to the phrase in the preceding chapter, verse 36, *When He had taken him in His arms*.

² In one of his Epistles S. Augustine says, "Looking to your man-

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17—22.

19. *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.*

20. *And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* 21. *Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.* 22. *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*

The rich man who came running and kneeled to Christ.

This very interesting story is related by each of the first three Evangelists, and in some respects more pointedly by S. Mark than by either of the others.

In the first place, S. Mark gives us a vivid picture

mer of life I have called you a good man; but you, looking to the words of Christ, may say to yourself, *There is none good but one, that is, God.* Which must needs be true, for The Truth said it; notwithstanding, I must not be regarded as having spoken in the false spirit of flattery, and as having contradicted the words of the Lord, as though He had said, *There is none good but one, that is, God,* and yet I had ventured in despite of this to call you *good*: for the Lord Himself did not contradict Himself, when He said, *The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.* God is good absolutely, and cannot possibly lose this quality; for He is not good by the participation of the goodness of any other, because the good in virtue of which He is good is Himself: whereas man whenever he is good is good in virtue of Him, and can by no means be so through his own power. For whoever is good becomes so by the Spirit of God; by His will our nature has been so created as to be capable of becoming good. It pertains to us therefore, if we would be good, to receive and keep that which He bestows who is good in Himself: and he who neglects to do this becomes in himself bad. Wherefore so far as a man acts rightly, that is, does good consciously and lovingly and piously, so far he is good: but so far as he sins, that is, deviates from the path of truth and charity and piety, so far he is bad. Who in this life can be free from sin? yet we call him good, whose good deeds prevail; and him best, who sins least."

of the earnestness with which the rich man came to make his application to Christ. The Lord had been in the house; and when He came out again into the way, *there came one running, and kneeled to Him*. The expression indicates at once the character of the man, and the manner in which his character shewed itself in this instance; his mode of presenting himself before Christ is quite in keeping with his application; he may be described throughout as one *running and kneeling*, full of the spirit of worship, but yet lacking the spirit of cool, quiet caution. This it was apparently, which the Lord wished to point out to him by catching him at the words *Good Master*: the man was too much in a condition of excitement: he was saying more than he thought of: he would do well to reflect before he went any further.

However, notwithstanding all this, *Jesus, beholding him, loved him*.¹ For this plain statement of our Lord's feelings we are indebted also to S. Mark. Let us not allow ourselves to deprive the words of their full meaning: when the Evangelist says that *Jesus loved him*, no doubt he means the words in their true sense, just as S. John uses the same phrase concerning Lazarus and Mary and Martha. There was, therefore, something in the rich man which was really loveable; and we must not put his case aside as that of an empty hypocritical person, having no claim upon our regard. The fact of his ultimately going away sad and grieved is all

¹ It has been suggested, that the Lord might have given some outward sign of love, as the Rabbis kissed the foreheads of their pupils when they wished to indicate approbation. Bengel remarks that the words, *beholding him loved him*, imply that the Lord shewed by His way of beholding him, by His looks, that He *did* love him.

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17—27.

Taking up
the Cross.

the more weighty and instructive, if we take it in connection with this record of our Lord's feelings.

In the address of our Lord, as reported by S. Mark, occur the remarkable words *take up the cross*. They could hardly be regarded afterwards as otherwise than a prophecy of His own cross, and they would harmonise well with language adopted by the Apostles, when the cross of Christ had become the centre of their affections and the symbol of their faith. Our Lord might however have used the phrase in not so definite a manner; he might possibly have intended to represent, that following Him involved the very extremity of self-sacrifice, that any one who wished to do so must do it in the frame of mind of one, who saw violent death before him and did not shrink from meeting it.

S. Matt.
xix. 23—26.
S. Luke
xviii. 24—27.

23. *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* 24. *And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* 25. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* 26. *And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?* 27. *And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

The rich
hardly
saved: the
disciples'
astonish-
ment.

The astonishment, expressed by the disciples at our Lord's teaching concerning the danger of riches, takes the reader, I think, somewhat by surprise. Their astonishment seems almost to have amounted to alarm, if we may judge from the expression, *Who then can be*

saved! They received the Lord's warning precisely as they might have done had they been rich men themselves, instead of being (as they were) very poor men; they did not, in fact, take a merely selfish view of their Master's words, and say, "Well, they do not touch us;" but they took them seriously to heart as conveying a very awful thought.

They might have been led to regard their Lord's words in this manner by two considerations. They might have said, "What is our hope of bringing men into the kingdom of God, if it be so difficult to enter it? Seeing that the world is such as it is, and that the love of money is so prevalent, what chance is there of our being able to effect a conversion, which our Master describes as well nigh impossible?" They might also have said, "*We* are not rich, but still this warning about riches comes very near to ourselves. We have the same tendency to love the world, which shews itself in rich men in the form of love of money. We must not be too confident concerning our permanent possession of the kingdom; for if the entrance be difficult, surely the exit may be easy."

In this way they might have done what all disciples of Christ ought to do, namely, apply as much as possible to themselves the spirit of their Master's teaching. They could do so all the better in consequence of the explanation which the Lord gave, and for which we are indebted to S. Mark's Gospel. When the disciples were astonished at their Master's first declaration concerning riches, He added the explanation, *How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* thus shewing that He referred not to the mere amount of a man's gold, but to the spirit

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28—31.

in which he used it; so that possibly one man might have ten talents and might enter into the kingdom of God, and another might have but one talent, and might yet find it impossible to get through the narrow gate.

S. Matt. xix.

27—30.

S. Luke

xviii. 28—30.

28. *Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.* 29. *And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's,¹* 30. *But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.* 31. *But many that are first shall be last, and the last first.*

Christ's
promises to
His disciples
included
persecu-
tions.

In these verses there is an important word for which we are indebted to this Gospel. S. Peter, referring no doubt in his mind to what our Lord had said concerning the difficulty of rich men entering His kingdom, inquired what they, the Apostles, should have, who had left all and followed Him. The answer was a very bright and glowing one, more so as reported by S. Mark than as we find it in either of the other Gospels. There is an emphatic balancing of the things to be gained against the things lost. If any man had left *houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands*, he was to receive an hundred-

¹ Dr. Wordsworth remarks that the word translated *the Gospel* in this and other passages of the New Testament signifies, in classical Greek, not *good news*, but the *reward given to the bearer of good news*. The former signification is peculiar to the New Testament, and may be regarded as an instance of the change wrought in language by the introduction of new thoughts to be expressed. The privilege of preaching the Gospel is the reward of true Evangelists.

fold now in this time, *houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers,*¹ *and children, and lands*; a very emphatic balancing, I say, of things gained against things lost; and all the more emphatic, because manifestly in a certain degree rhetorical; *lands* might be gained, but *mothers* not; and the effect of the whole would be to impress as deeply as possible the belief of an infinite gain to be secured by those who left all for Christ's sake. But now observe: S. Mark adds, *with persecutions*; a very remarkable addition, and perhaps more remarkable in consequence of the other evangelists having omitted it; for this omission can bear no other interpretation but this, that they regarded *the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed*. So there *may* be infinite gain, and yet persecution and distress. Christ did not deceive His disciples by raising hopes which would never be realized, and leading them to expect such peace as the world can give; but He promised them emphatically such peace as the world *cannot* give, and that peace is compatible with persecution. Observe that the Apostles never complained of being disappointed; they all testified that their Master had not deceived them, but had abundantly fulfilled His promises.

By the words of the thirty-first verse our Lord warns us, as I have observed in commenting upon the parallel passage in S. Matthew, not to be guided too strictly by

¹ It will be observed that our Lord omits *fathers* and *wives* from this list. It is not easy to see why the former should have been omitted, unless to prevent any confusion between human fathers and Him who is emphatically our Heavenly Father, to whom men are reconciled in Jesus Christ. It may be noted that some MSS. do insert *and father*; but none, I believe, repeat the word *wife*, which might have been misunderstood or abused.

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32—34.

appearances. We must not form too decided a judgment of men's condition before God by observing either what they have apparently left for Christ's sake, or what they have apparently gained; the last day will decide; till then we must wait. But I wish to note upon the words, that they seem to have been what I may reverently call favourite words with our Lord. They occur in S. Luke's Gospel in quite a different connection, and twice in S. Matthew; and their occurrence affords an example of a feature which I conceive to have belonged to our Lord's teaching, namely, that He was wont to reiterate weighty statements, and so to give them additional force.

S. Matt. xx.
17—19.
S. Luke
xviii. 31—33.

32. *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him,* 33. *Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles:* 34. *And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.*

Jesus going
before His
disciples to
suffer.

Observe that the Lord Jesus went *before the disciples* upon this last journey, and that they were amazed, and that as they followed they were afraid.¹ The emphasis with which the Evangelist relates this seems to suggest that there was something in the Lord's manner different

¹ We may, perhaps, be reminded of our Lord's words in S. John x.: "When he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

from ordinary. If we interpret the passage strictly we are almost compelled to take this view of it; for S. Mark speaks of this amazement and fear of the disciples before he tells us of Jesus taking them and speaking to them of the things which He was about to suffer. It is quite conceivable that the circumstance of His walking before them, apparently thinking but little of their company, as though He had some great work in hand in which they could not aid Him, and the fixed earnest but sad and thoughtful look, which His face exhibited, might have been enough to produce upon the minds of the disciples the effect described, without any explicit declaration of the awful events in store.

It may be, however, that the Evangelist is not so strictly to be interpreted, and that he gives in the thirty-second verse a general account of what took place in this last journey, and that the amazement and fear were caused by the Lord's description of His sufferings and death. Certainly if they were amazed and frightened before they heard their Master's declaration, they would be much more so afterwards: they knew how truthful He was, and they had confidence in the performance of His prophecies; and yet there they saw Him walking before them, pressing on towards the awful scene of His passion, neither asking nor needing their advice, marching on with steady step towards the dreadful combat alone.

Whichever we take to be the true view we may draw this conclusion, that our Lord's conduct shews as by a parable the relation in which He stands to His disciples. In every case He *goes before*, and they are bound to follow. They may be amazed for a time and afraid, but they have no choice but to follow Him; and

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X.
35—40.

following Him faithfully, they find at length their fears subside, and all the sorrows, which both they and He have to endure, change into joy unspeakable and full of glory.

S. Matt. xx.
20—23.

35. *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.* 36. *And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?* 37. *They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory.* 38. *But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* 39. *And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:* 40. *But to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.*

The ambitious prayer
of James and
John.

This passage occurs almost precisely in the same form in S. Matthew's Gospel; the only important difference being that S. Matthew attributes the ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee to their mother; and the principal points suggested by the passage have been there commented upon. One or two remarks may however here be added.

Although the mother was the actual applicant, still it is manifest that James and John were themselves parties to the request, and their conduct is therefore worthy of notice as throwing light upon their characters. Concerning the character of James we have probably for the most part formed no definite notion; he appears so slightly in Gospel history, except as an almost

passive though faithful and beloved follower of the Lord, and he is so early removed from the scene, and we are so entirely without any of his writings, that he probably presents himself to the minds of Christians as a faithful martyr and nothing more. With S. John the case is very different; nothing can be more different; we have a distinct conception of S. John; painters and poets have helped us to form it, and his Gospel and Epistles seem to bear it out. He is the gentlest and most loving of all the Apostles, almost feminine in his cast of countenance, feminine too in his patient, forbearing, loving spirit; he is the *disciple whom Jesus loved*, and every quality of mind which we think Jesus would have loved we instinctively attribute to him. With this notion in our mind it is well to look at the story of his ambitious conduct. Here we find him, not humbling himself that he may be exalted, not choosing for himself the lowest place, but ambitiously demanding for himself and his brother the two chief places in their Master's triumphant kingdom. Is this the conduct we should have expected from him whom Jesus loved? is it not rather the conduct of one rightly surnamed a *son of Thunder*?

If, indeed, S. John had known what he was asking, and had been aware that in asking for the primacy in station in the Lord's kingdom he was asking for primacy in suffering, his ambition might well have been pardoned. But Jesus said unto them, *Ye know not what ye ask*: and the answer of the Lord is worthy of notice, because it has a very wide application with respect to prayers which His disciples make. The literal granting of prayers may often involve a very different gift from that which the suppliant desired: and this truth is

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41—44.

admirably seized in that Collect which commences thus,
*O Lord, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and
 our ignorance in asking, we beseech Thee to have com-
 passion on our infirmities.*

S. Matt. xx.
 24—28.

41. *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much
 displeased with James and John.* 42. *But Jesus called
 them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they
 which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise
 lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority
 upon them.* 43. *But so shall it not be among you: but
 whosoever will be great among you, shall be your
 minister:* 44. *And whosoever of you will be the chiefest,
 shall be servant of all.* 45. *For even the Son of man
 came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to
 give His life a ransom for many.*

There may possibly be an emphasis belonging to the phrase, *they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles*, or (as it might be translated) *they which seem to rule over the Gentiles*; the phrase may possibly express the emptiness of authority which is merely earthly in its aims and conduct, and the fact that real authority is from God alone. It is not however wise to lay too much stress upon such a form of speech, inasmuch as there are certainly cases in which the word translated by the phrase *which are accounted* is without any special force, and inasmuch as S. Matthew gives the simple phrase *the princes of the Gentiles*.

Preemi-
 nence in the
 Church, as
 defined by
 Christ.

With the conduct of these Gentile rulers our Lord contrasts that which He desires should be seen in His own Church; and it is very important for us to gather as accurately as we can from our Lord's own mouth what His commands on the subject really were. In the first place it cannot be that He intended that there

should be in His Church no rulers, none raised above their brethren for the purpose of ordering their conduct and administering the laws of the Church. This is manifest even from our Lord's reference to His own case as an illustration of His meaning. He says, *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*; and yet on another occasion He said to His disciples, *Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am*. But when He thus asserted His preeminence, it will be remembered that it was in connection with that symbolical act of general humility and ministering to others, the washing of His disciples' feet; in fact, He added immediately, *If then I have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet*. The conclusion to be drawn therefore is, not that there is to be no preeminence of one above another in Christ's Church, but that readiness to minister to others and to sacrifice self is to be the ground of advancement to such preeminence. There has been no more fruitful source of mischief in the Church than neglect of our Lord's words: men have been advanced in almost all ages upon very different grounds from those which He laid down, and the consequence has been the introduction of a worldly spirit, and the same principles of conduct as those which Christ condemned in the rulers of the Gentiles. Men have become rulers, and emphatically *not* ministers; and because they have not been ministers, therefore they have been fundamentally and radically unfit for advancement before their brethren.

46. *And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and, a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway-side begging.* 47. *And when he heard that it was Jesus*

S. Matt. xx.
29—34.
S. Luke
xviii. 35—43.

CHAP. of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son
 X. of David, have mercy on me. 48. And many charged
 46—52. him that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the
 more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.
 49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be
 called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him,
 Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. 50. And he,
 casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.
 51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt
 thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said
 unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52. And
 Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made
 thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and
 followed Jesus in the way.

Sixteenth
 miracle.

The history of the healing of this blind man is to be found in all the first three Evangelists, and there is no fact of importance added by this Gospel to what we already know from that of S. Matthew. There are, however, several points in S. Mark's account which are of interest as characteristic of that Evangelist's own peculiar style, and as giving brightness and emphasis to the story.

Thus, for instance, S. Mark gives us the name of the blind man, and he speaks of him as one who was well known; it was natural that S. Peter should have noted down this name, and if S. Peter's account of the miracle was the basis, direct or indirect, of those given in the Gospels of S. Matthew and S. Luke, it is not to be wondered at that these Evangelists should have omitted the name, as being a matter of no importance to those for whom they wrote. And, in connection with this remark, it may be observed that if Bartimeus was a well-known character, the healing of his blindness would

be very appropriate just now, when our Lord no longer desired to conceal Himself, but to prepare for a triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

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X.
46—52.

Again, S. Mark has recorded the words spoken by those whom Jesus sent to call the blind man, *Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.* And then we have one of those little touches which so especially distinguish this Gospel; the man *cast away his garment*, and rose, and came to Jesus. One might perhaps put a spiritual interpretation upon this, and say that every suppliant who comes to Christ to be healed must throw away the rags of righteousness which have hitherto covered him, and come to Jesus simply as he is; but I think that the indication afforded by the mention of such an incident, that we have in our hands the report of one who actually saw the man rise and disencumber himself of his garment, is of more solid worth than any such spiritual interpretation.

The man
casting away
his garment.

Lastly, we have in this story an example of those notable contradictions amongst the Evangelists, of which some persons have spoken and written so much. S. Mark is at issue with both S. Matthew and S. Luke; S. Matthew says there were *two* blind men, S. Mark mentions only *one*; S. Luke speaks of the miracle as having been performed when they were approaching Jericho, S. Mark says it was done when they were leaving it. I will not try to get rid of these varieties of statement, but take the occasion of asking, Is it possible that on such discrepancies as these earnest-minded men can ever rest any serious doubts concerning the truthfulness of the Gospels?

A discrepancy
amongst the
Evangelists.

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I—IO.

CHAPTER XI.

S. Matt.
xxi. 1—9.
S. Luke
xix. 29—40.

1. *And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples, 2. And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. 7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him. 8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.*

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

In recording the history of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem S. Matthew mentions an ass with its colt; S. Mark speak of one animal only, confining attention apparently to the animal upon which the Lord actually rode. In describing the manner in which the disciples

found the colt, S. Mark, as usual, gives some minute details, which seem to bring the whole picture very clearly before our eyes. The colt was *tied by the door without*, and it was *in a place where two ways met*, or rather in *the street*, for that appears to be the meaning of the Greek word.¹ It may well be supposed that S. Peter was one of the two disciples who were sent, and that this his own account of what he did. But the chief distinction between S. Matthew and S. Mark is this, that S. Matthew refers the whole transaction to ancient prophecy, and S. Mark does not. Of course the entry into Jerusalem was not the less a fulfilment of prophecy because S. Mark does not point it out as such; but his omission to do so seems to shew that the story has a meaning and significance additional to, and independent of, that which belongs to it as a fulfilment of prophecy. In fact, this remark is one of very general application. Events are said to have come about in order that prophecy might be fulfilled, but it is equally true that prophecies declared the coming of events, because those events were necessary in themselves. Christ was born of a pure virgin that prophecy might be fulfilled, but it is also true that it was necessary in the economy of God that Christ should be so born, and that the event being thus rendered necessary was declared by the prophet while still in the womb of time.

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XI.
1—10.

Reference
to prophecy
omitted by
S. Mark.

What, then, was the special significance of the Lord's triumphal entry? It has for us this value at least, that it gives us something of a measure of the humiliation of Christ. It was the only occasion upon which He per-

The signifi-
cance of the
triumphal
entry.

¹ Dean Trench suggests *a crooked lane*; Dr. Wordsworth says that the word does not mean the highway in the front of the house, but the back way, which went round the house.

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II.

mitted Himself to be the object of public honour, and it suggests to us what the humility of the rest of His life was, if this be the occasion most full of worldly glory. And, besides this, it seemed to declare that the Lord's hour was now come; there was to be no more concealment of His person or His character, no more charge to His disciples, *See ye tell no man*; the people might shout their Hosannas, might proclaim Him to be the King of Israel; the Son of Man was now to be glorified, glorified first by the shouts of the people rejoicing, then by the cross and passion.

S. Matt.
xxi. 12—17.

11. *And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the Temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.*

I have observed, in commenting upon S. Matthew xxi. 12, that this verse supplies an important correction, or rather explanation, of what S. Matthew tells us. It shews, as I have there remarked, that our Lord did not cleanse the Temple with a multitude at His back; He availed Himself of no popular excitement; but He simply went up to the Temple and examined the condition of things there, and then retired to Bethany.

A lesson
concerning
Christian
discretion.

If we may venture to draw from so august an occasion a lesson applicable to common life, it may be said that our Lord's conduct gives us a good example of religious discretion. We know how hotly within the Saviour's heart the zeal for the honour of His Father's house was burning, but His time was not yet come, and therefore He could observe all that was going on without saying a word; the fire kindled, but the Lord restrained Himself, and would not yet speak with His tongue; this was the time to be silent, the morrow was the time both to

speak and to act. How much mischief is sometimes done, and how much good lost, by not speaking and acting at the right time!

But, leaving this homely view of the subject, how very grand in its simplicity is the picture of Jesus looking round upon all things in the Temple! He had come as the Son into His Father's house, as the Lord and the heir to claim His own. The Temple had been built for Him; all the sacrifices which had been offered up within it had pointed to Him; all the answers to prayer which had been received in it had been given through Him; and now the shadow was to pass away, and the substance to take its place. If we may venture to guess what thoughts passed through the Lord's mind, I should say that He did not wholly think of those evils and corruptions which the next day He rebuked; these were excrescences, so to speak; these were incur-sions made by the Evil One into the sacred precincts; but the Temple itself was still God's house, it was the holiest spot upon earth, the most especial place of the Divine presence. If it would have affected any serious-minded Jew, who knew the past and the future of that Temple, to stand within its walls at such a time as this, when the true Paschal Lamb had just entered its enclosure, what must have been the thoughts of the Lord Himself as He entered the Temple and looked round about upon all things?

The Lord
looking
round about
upon all
things in the
Temple.

12. *And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry.* 13. *And seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any-thing thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.* 14. *And Jesus*

S. Matt.
xxi. 18, 19.

CHAP. answered and said unto it, *No man eat fruit of thee*
 XI. *hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it.*
 12—14.

The fruit-
less fig-tree.

The history of the fruitless fig-tree is given in this Gospel with great particularity. One sentence which occurs has given considerable trouble to commentators; according to the English version we read that *the time of figs was not yet*; and the question has suggested itself, if this were so, why should the Lord have pronounced a curse upon the tree? In order to avoid the difficulties raised by this question, various attempts have been made to educe a different sense from the original. It would be rash to give a positive decision in such a case, but it may certainly be stated that the meaning conveyed by the English version is that which is obviously suggested by the original, and which would probably have been adopted at once, if no difficulties had appeared to be necessarily bound up with it.

Is it not possible, however, to adopt the words as given by our English version, and yet to assign to them a meaning not inconsistent with our Lord's character or with the whole spirit of the history? It should be remembered that our Lord had been attracted at a distance by the appearance of this tree; there was an abundant show of *leaves*, and, inasmuch as in the case of the fig-tree the fruit appears before the leaves, there was reason to suppose that there might also be fruit; the show of leaves was extraordinary, and it would not have been much more strange if there had been an extraordinary crop of fruit. Had the tree been like its companions in respect of leaves, Christ would not, as we may suppose, have expected to find in it a difference from them in other respects.

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15—19.

But the fig-tree *had* leaves, and thereby admirably well typified the Jewish nation, of which beyond question it is to be regarded as a symbol. Doubtless the time of figs in the garden of God's Church was not yet; the time could not be until Christ had accomplished His work; and accordingly the nations were barren, and God pitied their barrenness. But the fig-tree of the house of Israel *had* leaves; they gloried in their appearance of growth, they would not allow themselves to be accounted like the rest of the nations; and indeed they ought to have been different; they were (if we may so speak) a tree which had been cultured in a special manner, and the same treatment which had produced the leaves ought to have produced fruit. The sin of Israel was, that, whereas the leaves of profession were abundant, the fruit of practical holiness was for the most part not to be found.

15. *And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the Temple. 17. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?¹ but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His doctrine. 19. And when even was come, He went out of the city.*

S. Matt.
xxi. 12—17.
S. Luke
xix. 45—48.

The cleansing of the Temple may be deemed to have

¹ *My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations*, would probably be a better rendering. It is given in the margin.

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15—19.

been the special work of the Lord for that day upon which He accomplished it. We learn from S. Matthew that He also healed some blind and lame persons in the Temple, and that the children sang *Hosanna*, much to the displeasure of the chief priests and scribes; still the cleansing of His Father's house from pollution and desecration was the special work of the day, and as such is worthy of reverent consideration.

The Lord's
zeal for His
Father's
house.

In general we may say, that we might have been quite sure, even without such evidence as the Lord's conduct afforded, that he would have been very zealous for the honour of God's Temple. Was it not His Father's house? had it not been the scene of the chief manifestations of God's presence? had not prophets and psalmists declared its glories, and spoken of it as the earthly spring of God's grace and mercy? How could He, who was the very Son of God, regard the house otherwise? And yet there is something notable in the period chosen by Christ for this work of purification: when we find Him, according to S. John's Gospel, performing a similar work at the commencement of His ministry, we easily understand the meaning of the act; it was symbolical of that reformation of the worship of God, which it was the business of His ministry to preach; but now that the Temple is doomed, according to His own emphatic words (uttered soon afterwards) *left desolate*, is it not strange that He should think it worth while to shew jealousy for its honour, that He should treat it, not as the symbol of Jewish corruption, but as the symbol of the presence of God? Does he not thus teach us that God's purposes change not, that when God has chosen a place as His Temple He ever claims it as such, that human

perversity cannot destroy His title to that which He has once consecrated as His own?

If we try to realize the scene to our imaginations I think we cannot fail to account it strange, that the Lord should have been permitted to carry out His work of purification so peacefully and without opposition. Doubtless the interest shewn in Him by many of the people had (humanly speaking) something to do with the result; but we may well believe that there was an influence more than human at work, subduing the minds of men and compelling them to submit to the gentle force which Christ used. And, if we may venture from so extraordinary a case to draw a lesson for ordinary life, we may say that the result shews how great things may be done for the honour of God by simplicity of purpose and boldness of conduct in His behalf.

Note that in this case, as in others, that which moved the people in favour of Christ moved the scribes and chief priests in the same proportion against Him. The people wished to *hear* Him, *they* wished to destroy Him.

And do not omit to observe, before leaving the passage, how that Christ's cleansing of the Temple may be regarded as a figurative lesson concerning His jealousy for the purity of the bodies of Christians, in which God has condescended to dwell, and which are called *Temples of the Holy Ghost*.

20. *And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.* 21. *And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away.* 22. *And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.* 23. *For verily I say unto you, that whosoever*

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15—19.

The bodies
of Christians
to be
cleansed, as
being Tem-
ples of God.

S. Matt.
xxi. 19—22.

Seventeenth
miracle.

CHAP.
XI.
20—23.

shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea ; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass ; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

A light
thrown upon
our Lord's
teaching by
the history
of the
miracle of
the fig-tree.

The moral which the Lord draws from the miracle of the fig-tree is very worthy of observation, because it throws a light upon the interpretation of much of His teaching. It is impossible to read the account of the miracle without feeling sure that it was intended as a parable concerning the Jewish Church ; the leaves without fruit, the promise of a crop without any performance, and the destruction which followed, so exactly exhibit the relation in which the Jews stood to Christ, and the curse which was on the point of falling upon them, that no reader can easily miss the interpretation of our Lord's symbolical act. And yet, when our Lord comments upon the miracle Himself, He never once alludes to the Jews, or hints at any reference to them in the work which He has performed : instead of this, He gives a lesson concerning faith, and brings the lesson home immediately to His own disciples by promising that they should do greater works than that which they had witnessed, if only they had faith.

Here, then, we have a miracle, which the terms of the history compel us to recognise as having a special local interpretation with respect to the Jews, and which our Lord has Himself rescued from being deemed as of only local interpretation by His own more general comment. And I say that we may obtain from this a light for the interpretation of other portions of His teaching. We have virtually the Lord's own assertion of the double teaching of His parables. Frequently we find a parable which the Lord Himself applied to the

people of His time, or which they so applied themselves, or which is so manifestly applicable as to admit of no doubt; and yet it appears to have a wider meaning; it exactly suits ourselves; it could not have suited better if Christ had spoken it to us directly. What is the conclusion to be drawn from this? Surely that both applications were intended, and one as much as the other, by Him who in His wisdom spoke the parable. Christ's words are not of private interpretation; they adapt themselves to the wants of all, provided only that they be studied humbly and with prayer.

But how are we to understand the Lord's declaration concerning the removal of the mountain into the sea? Some commentators have remarked that actual physical miracles, really as great and striking, were performed in the name of Christ in early times. This however brings us upon dangerous ground, and looks like a sacrifice of the spirit of the Lord's promise to its letter: ought we not rather to look away from the material mountain of rock, to which our Lord pointed as He spoke the words, to the spiritual mountains of difficulty which would have to be removed, before the rough places could be made plain before Him, and His kingdom established upon earth?

CHAP.
XI.
24—26.

The promise
concerning
faith which
should move
mountains.

24. *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* 25. *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.* 26. *But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

The precepts of these verses are almost identical with the teaching which our Lord had already given

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24—26.

A lesson
from the
Sermon on
the Mount
repeated.

long before in the Sermon on the Mount. The repetition of them upon this occasion is instructive in general as an example of His manner of teaching; He brought out of His treasurehouse on many occasions things old as well as new, and has thus suggested to ourselves that we also can only hope to make religious teaching permanent by a reiteration of simple lessons. But the repetition is still more instructive if we observe the wide difference of the circumstances upon this occasion from those of the Sermon on the Mount. Then the Lord was professedly sitting down to teach, then He was commencing His ministry; now His ministry was nearly completed, and the time of teaching the multitudes gone by; but He will not omit an opportunity of impressing a lesson important to be remembered and very easily forgotten. And would not the disciples feel, do not we ourselves feel, that that lesson must have been of extreme importance, that forgiveness of injuries must be very nearly connected with our spiritual life, when we find the Lord almost at the close of His ministry, and on the eve of such tremendous events, impressing so plain and homely a lesson?

But what was the connection between the cursing of the fig-tree and forgiveness of trespasses? From the power which our Lord had exerted upon the fig-tree He took occasion to teach His disciples how they might do equally great things. How? By prayer. But how is prayer to be rendered availing? By forgiveness of our brother on our part. Hence, according to our Lord's teaching, any consideration of the efficacy of prayer leads at once to the consideration of brotherly love and forgiveness. Even the cursing of a fig-tree pointed to this great Christian duty; and perhaps all the more

decidedly because it *was* a case of cursing. The Lord might intend His disciples to draw a distinction between themselves and Him; He had pronounced a curse, because vengeance was His; they must not do so; blessing not cursing must be the foundation of their mighty works; it was in the exercise of brotherly love that they could remove mountains.

27. *And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the Temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,* 28. *And say unto Him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things?* 29. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.* 30. *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer Me.* 31. *And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him?* 32. *But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.* 33. *And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.*

CHAP.
XI.
27—33.

S. Matt.
xxi. 23—27.
S. Luke
xx. 1—8.

This passage agrees almost word for word with the corresponding passage in S. Matthew, and the slight differences which exist are not of a kind to give rise to any particular remark. Hence I might refer in this as in several other instances to what I have said in illustration of the passage as it occurs in the former Gospel. It may, however, be profitable to contemplate the story from a new point of view.

May not our Lord's conduct be usefully regarded as

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XI.

27—33.

A lesson on
Christian
Evidences.

a lesson upon *Christian Evidences*? The question, *By what authority doest Thou these things?* is that which has been asked by all the modern schools of unbelief; and it is the endeavour to answer this question that has formed the basis of that department of theology, which we term *the Evidences*. Now it is quite right that this department of theology should receive its full share of attention. From the earliest times the religion of Christ has had its apologists; and instead of needing defence less and less as time rolls on, the probability is rather that the need will be greater and greater, because the arguments become more complicated, and each opponent of Christianity has the benefit of the efforts of all his predecessors. But however this may be, we may be quite sure that the question, *By what authority doest Thou these things?* will often be asked; and we ought by all means to supply answers adapted to the particular sense in which the question is asked; but so far as the practical result of such answers upon the minds of those who ask the question is concerned, we should do well to remember what our Lord said to those who asked *Him* the question. He referred them to the baptism of John; and He did so, I apprehend, not merely with the view of asking them a question which they could not answer, but chiefly because that baptism was a baptism of *repentance*; that baptism was the door to the Lord's own ministry; men who had not accepted that baptism could not expect to understand the authority of Jesus; and if the querists had sincerely and humbly received John's baptism of repentance, they would have been prepared to receive without difficulty the higher baptism of Christ. May we not from this view of the history draw the conclusion, that they who

would understand by what authority Christ has done all that He has done in the world, must first repent of their sins, and do works meet for repentance?

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27—33.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAP.
XII.
1—12.

1. *And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.* 2. *And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.* 3. *And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.* 4. *And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.* 5. *And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.* 6. *Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.* 7. *But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.* 8. *And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.* 9. *What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.* 10. *And have ye not read this Scripture, The*

S. Matt.
xxi. 33—46.
S. Luke
xx. 9—19.

Fourth
reference to
prophecy.

CHAP.
XII.
1—12.

stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 12. And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way.

*Fourth
parable.*

The near agreement of S. Matthew and S. Mark in several of the phrases employed, and the very considerable differences which nevertheless exist in their reports of this parable, make the passage worthy of study to those who wish to examine into the relation in which the first two Gospels stand to each other. He who so examines will be equally struck with their unity and their independence. The only points in which S. Mark's account is more striking are the description which he gives of the treatment of the successive servants, who were sent to demand the fruits of the vineyard, and that of the mission of the son: *having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.*

*Universal
application
of special
parables.*

We may note in the case of this as of other parables, how wonderfully the teaching of our Lord, which was called forth by the special circumstances of His own history, nevertheless adapts itself completely to the wants of humanity at large. Here we have a parable clearly spoken with the intention of bringing the sins of the rulers of the Jews to their remembrance; they so understood it, and were only restrained from taking vengeance upon the unwelcome teacher by fear of the people. Every circumstance of the parable finds its minute fulfilment in Jewish history; and yet how thoroughly does the parable set forth human duties and responsibilities! Take it as a picture of a nation,

and we see God calling for the results of His care and guardianship; or take it as a picture of the history of an individual man, and you have still the great truth that God hedges in human hearts as His vineyard, and demands fruit. The greatest claim that He has ever made has been through His only and well-beloved Son. He sends Him *last*; if that claim be neglected, then no demand is made further, but the Lord of the vineyard comes in wrath to take vengeance.

Note also that the phrase, *he sent him also last*, may suggest to our minds the final character of the Gospel dispensation; all previous revelations led up to Christ; now God has spoken to us by His own Son, and it is for us not to look for new revelations, but to guard with all fidelity the faith once delivered unto the saints.

13. *And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch Him in His words.* 14. *And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? 15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? bring Me a penny, that I may see it. 16. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Cæsar's. 17. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at Him.*

CHAP.
XII.
13—17.

S. Matt.
xxii. 15—22.
S. Luke
xx. 19—26.

I have said all that I consider necessary for the elucidation of this passage in the parallel place of

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XII.
13—17.

S. Matthew's Gospel. I may take this opportunity of adding two remarks, which, though extremely different in kind, may both be found useful.

A modern
objection
considered.

In the first place it is strange, but it is the fact, that the ingenuity of some modern thinkers has discovered that after all the conduct of our Lord did not shew the wisdom which those who witnessed it imagined. It has been suggested that the existence of the image and superscription of Cæsar did not prove that the coin belonged to him, and that therefore the argument, *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, was fallacious. Of course there was no proof that the individual coin belonged to Cæsar, but there *was* proof that Cæsar was admitted on the evidence of the current coin of the country to be the ruler, and therefore to be the person to whom tribute was due. I have thought this quibble worth mentioning, because it is a specimen of the devices which they are content to adopt, who are determined to reduce to an ordinary history the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A spiritual
interpreta-
tion of the
Lord's
words.

In the second place, it is hardly possible for any one to read the story of the tribute-money and our Lord's comment, *Render to God the things that are God's*, without giving to the words a spiritual interpretation, which brings them nearly home to himself.¹ For does

¹ "Lord, take my affections which the world has stolen; take back the treasure, for it is Thine, as a tribute which I owe to Thee, for Thine image is impressed upon it. Thou didst form it, Lord, at the moment of my baptism, which was my second birth; but it is all defaced. The image of the world is so graven, that Thine can no longer be recognised. Thou alone couldst create my soul; Thou alone canst create it anew; Thou alone couldst form Thine image there; Thou alone canst form it again, and reimpress Thy defaced likeness, that is, Jesus Christ my Saviour, who is the brightness of Thy glory, and the express image of Thy person."—PASCAL.

not the imprint of the image and superscription of God exactly describe the peculiar condition of each one of ourselves, first as men, then as Christians? If we look at any Christian man, and say, whose image and superscription has he received? the answer is ready, He is created in the image of God, and he has been signed with the sign of the cross in token that he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified. And hence also the words, *Render to God the things that are God's*, apply with a wonderful fulness and force to all baptized Christians. God has marked them as His own: He has impressed His own image, and called them by His own name, as a memorial and proof that they have no right to serve any other gods but Him, that they are bound to offer themselves up body, soul, and spirit to Him and His service.

18. *Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying,*
 19. *Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.* 20. *Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.* 21. *And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.* 22. *And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.* 23. *In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.* 24. *And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?* 25. *For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.* 26. *And as*

S. Matt.
xxii. 23—33.
S. Luke
xx. 27—38.

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XII.
18—27.

*touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?*¹ 27. *He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.*

Belief of the
Jews in a
resurrection.

The prevalence of the belief in a resurrection of the dead amongst the Jews of our Lord's time, is a fine instance of the power exerted by the spirit of the revelation which was made to the ancient Church. So far as the letter is concerned, it cannot be doubted that the doctrine of the resurrection was not made one of the special articles of divine revelation; no sanctions were given to the law depending upon future retribution; and if we read the accounts of the death of prophets and patriarchs and kings, we do not find the hope of the life to come uniformly illuminating their dark hours. Here and there may be a text which may possibly be interpreted as referring to the resurrection; but certainly, taking the Old Testament as a whole, it is impossible to deny, that one of its most striking distinctions from the New is the absence of clear declarations concerning the life to come. And thus, if the Sadducees chose to take their stand upon literal interpretation of Scripture, they would undoubtedly be able to make out a very good case, and to set themselves up as men who took a plain view of the oracles of God.

And yet, to any person who looked below the surface, how much there was in the spirit of God's dealings that

¹ *The bush* in this passage means that portion of Scripture which was known by the name of *the bush*. In somewhat in the same way we have in 2 Sam. i. 18, *the bow* put for the portion of Scripture following, or *the song of the bow*.

pleaded for belief in a world to come! Our Lord fixed attention upon one passage in which this spirit shewed itself. By calling Himself *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, God put such honour on these patriarchs, and so clearly implied their present union with Himself, as to suggest to thoughtful minds the impossibility of believing that they had wholly passed away from the earth. Might not the original creation of man have been quoted for the same purpose? We find God creating man in His own image, threatening death as the consequence of sin, and thus passing sentence upon sin, and putting a curse upon the tempter, but evidently holding out hopes to men. Does not this point to some destiny for man essentially higher in kind than any that is reserved for beasts? Certain it is that the spirit of the revelation did somehow make itself felt; and in our Lord's time the general orthodox belief was in a resurrection, while the Sadducees were a small minority, whose general tone and manner of life would have a tendency to strengthen the persuasion that they at least had not laid hold upon the truth.

28. *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all?* 29. *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:* 30. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.* 31. *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.* 32. *And the scribe said unto Him, Well,*

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XII.

18—27.

S. Matt.
xxii. 34—40.

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XII.
28—34.

Master, Thou hast said the truth : for there is one God ; and there is none other but He : 33. And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. 34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.

The character of the scribe cleared by S. Mark.

The estimate which we are led to form of this scribe from the account of his conversation with our Lord preserved in this Gospel, is much higher and more favourable than that which results from the perusal of the parallel passage of S. Matthew. S. Matthew tells us that *a lawyer asked Him a question, tempting Him*, which might imply that the question was asked with the same wicked intention as many others that were put by persons of the same class ; but S. Mark represents the questioner, whom he calls *one of the scribes*, as having heard the reasoning which had been going on and having been struck with the wisdom of our Lord's answers, and as having thus been led to propound his question, *Which is the first commandment of all?* The remainder of S. Mark's account will make us feel quite sure that the scribe did come in good faith and honesty to Christ, and not with any wicked design of entangling Him in His talk.

When our Lord had given His determination of the question put to Him, the scribe added a commentary of his own. He applauded the simple and wise decision which the Lord had given, and declared that the result of all his study of the law had been to produce the conviction, that to love God with all the heart, and

understanding, and soul, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all outward ritual performances. This was indeed a grand and noble result of his study, and it shews us that however the design of the ceremonial of the Temple might have been mistaken by some, and however much ritual observances might have been abused, yet there were some who did arrive at the truth, and many more who might have done so had they honestly made the attempt. The scribe's answer is rendered specially memorable by our Lord's declaration concerning it: *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*: you have advanced as far as the law can bring you: you have perceived that the love of God and your neighbour is the end of the law: what hinders you from advancing a step further, and recognizing the revelation which God has made to you in His Son? What more do you need? You need repentance and faith; you need the conviction of your own deficiencies in discharging the duties of which you have spoken; you need faith in Him who alone can give you what you need, who can reveal the Father to you, and prove Himself to be the way, and the truth, and the life.

35. *And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the Temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?* 36. *For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.* 37. *David therefore himself calleth Him Lord: and whence is He then his son? And the common people heard Him gladly.* 38. *And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places,*

CHAP.
XII.
28—34.

S. Matt.
xxii. 41—46.
S. Luke xx.
41—47.

CHAP.
XII.
35—40.

39. *And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:* 40. *Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.*

S. Augustine remarks¹ that the Lord's question puzzled the Jews "because they knew of the Lord Christ only what could be seen with the eyes, not that which could be understood by the heart. But, if they had had eyes within as they had without, from that which they saw without they would have known Him to be David's son; from that which they saw within they would have known Him to be David's Lord." And again he observes² that the Catholic faith solves the Lord's question, "*How is He Lord? Because in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. How is He the Son? Because the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.*"

The words, which follow the Lord's question in verse 37, seem to belong more properly to the succeeding verse. There was a large multitude ready to listen to Him, and therefore He began to teach them. The Pharisees and the Sadducees had failed to entangle Him in His talk, and He had silenced them by His questions; but there were many who were anxious to hear Him, and to them therefore He now addressed Himself. S. Mark gives us a very brief account of what the Lord said; less than three complete verses contain the whole of what he has recorded; and the reader of S. Mark's Gospel, who wishes to form an opinion of the relation in which it stands to S. Matthew's, should compare this brief report with that which S. Matthew has given. He will observe that it is at this

A remarkable omission in S. Mark's Gospel.

¹ On Psalm xxxiii.

² On Psalm liv.

point that we find in S. Matthew the terrible woe-discourse, with which our Lord concluded His public ministry in the Temple; and of this discourse S. Mark has given us only the faintest hint.

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XII.
35—40.

In my commentary on S. Matthew I have contrasted this closing sermon with the Sermon on the Mount, with which the report of the Lord's public ministry opens; and it is worthy of remark that whereas S. Mark has almost omitted the one, he has quite passed over the other. I can form no theory, nor do I think it needful to do so, to account for facts such as these; but certainly it is to me entirely inconceivable that S. Mark should have seen S. Matthew's Gospel when he wrote the passage now under consideration; and we have therefore at least this advantage from the difference between the two Evangelists, that it establishes S. Mark's independence. It is easy to say in general that S. Mark abbreviated S. Matthew, but let any one compare S. Matthew xxiii. with S. Mark xii. 38—40, and say whether he believes it possible that S. Mark could have abbreviated in such a manner.

41. *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.* 42. *And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites,¹ which make a farthing,* 43. *And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury:* 44. *For all they did*

S. Luke
xxi. 1—4.

¹ The word translated *mite* occurs in one other place of the New Testament, namely, S. Luke xii. 59. For the benefit of his Roman readers S. Mark gives the explanation that two mites make a farthing, or *quadrans*, the fourth part of an *as*.

CHAP.
XII.
41—44.

The poor
widow who
threw two
mites into
the treasury.

cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This is one of those passages which exhibit to us in the most striking manner the character of our Lord's teaching. All the discussions upon the principle of almsgiving, all the exhortations to liberality that ever were given, have not done as much as this simple story towards impressing upon the hearts of men the character of that giving which is acceptable to God. S. Matthew has not recorded the story, and has thereby given further evidence that he never saw S. Mark's Gospel in its present form, for he could hardly have omitted it; but it is worth while to bear in mind S. Matthew's account of this last visit to the Temple, while we read this addition to his history which S. Mark has preserved. The whole character of our Lord's conduct was that of one giving a final severe reproof to those who had rejected Him; we seem for the moment to see Christ come to judgment, Christ taking vengeance, and yet under such circumstances He would not lose the opportunity of giving a permanent lesson to His disciples and to mankind upon the simple homely duty of offering for the service of God.

Jesus sat over against the treasury, and watched the people putting in their money. He might have been weary and have been taking His rest, or He might have placed Himself where He could see those who offered for the very purpose of giving a lesson to His disciples. Anyhow He saw all that was done; and it is well for us to remember that this is a parable of that which goes on now, when we make our offerings to God. Christ sits over against the treasury. He knows what men give and why they give it: and He estimates offerings now

upon the same principle as that which He adopted in the days of His flesh, namely, the principle of looking to the motive and the amount of effort made for the purpose of offering to God. Widows' mites in these days are often more valuable than gold, more pleasing to God, it may be more effective in promoting His service.

The abundant contribution to God's treasury, which our Lord witnessed, was going on at the very time that the Jews rejected Him. Thus there may be a form of godliness without the power; and men may be punctual in the performance of outward observances while the spirit of religion has not entered their hearts.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAP.
XIII.
1—8.

1. *And as He went out of the Temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!* 2. *And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* 3. *And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,* 4. *Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?* 5. *And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:* 6. *For many shall come*

S. Matt.
xxiv. 1—8.
S. Luke
xxi. 5—11.

CHAP.
XIII.
1—8.

in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 7. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be: but the end shall not be yet. 8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

Comparison
with the
parallel
passage in
S. Matthew.

Any reader of the Gospels, who wishes to observe the manner in which the first two are connected with each other, would do well to compare this chapter with the twenty-fourth of S. Matthew. The first eight verses are as nearly as possible the same in the two; the chief distinction is, that whereas S. Matthew speaks generally of the *disciples* coming to Him upon the Mount of Olives, S. Mark tells us more particularly that it was *Peter and James and John and Andrew* who made the inquiry, *When shall these things be?* Had the resemblance been as close throughout as in these eight verses, we should probably have said without hesitation that they came from the same report; but when we compare the entire chapters we can hardly fail to come to another conclusion, namely, that the means of information of the two Evangelists were not entirely the same, and that certainly neither of them ever saw the work of the other in its finished form.

In one respect S. Mark's account may, I think, be regarded as a guide to the interpretation of that of S. Matthew. The question of the disciples, as recorded in verse 4, is free from the ambiguity attaching to the parallel place in S. Matthew; it is distinctly limited to an inquiry concerning the time when those things will be fulfilled of which the Lord has spoken; there is no reference to the *end of the world*, as distinct from *all*

these things,¹ and we are therefore justified in interpreting the whole of the prophecy as having reference to the destruction of the Jewish Temple and polity, and regarding it as involving further and more distant events, only upon that principle which applies to many other if not to all prophecies, and according to which they stretch out beyond that which appears to be their immediate intention into a more dim future. And yet they stretch into that future so distinctly, and the results which hang upon their connection with it are so great and important, that it would be wrong to speak of interpretations which go beyond the events more immediately contemplated as secondary interpretations; on the other hand they are, in respect of lasting and general interest, frequently the primary interpretations of the prophecy, as any one will be compelled to allow, who reads (for instance) the book of Isaiah, and observes how *the vision which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem* contains a vision of the universal kingdom of Christ.

9. *But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them.* 10. *And the gospel must first be published among all nations.* 11. *But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.* 12. *Now the brother shall betray the*

S. Matt.
xxiv. 9—14.
S. Luke
xxi. 12—19.

¹ Some interpreters, however, draw a distinction between *these things* in the first clause of verse 4, and *all these things* in the second clause, referring the former to the Temple, and taking the second more generally.

CHAP.
XIII.
9—13.

brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

The
strength and
the weak-
ness of the
disciples.

These words of Christ exhibit in a very clear light the peculiar strength and peculiar weakness of His servants. Nothing can be more open and plain than the declaration which He makes of future troubles; councils and synagogues, rulers and kings, are all exhibited, and the ill-treatment which will accompany His service not in any degree veiled; but then on the other hand the Lord no less distinctly intimates that His servants stand upon a ground which no enemies can reach, they are not even to trouble themselves to think what they will answer, because the proper answer will be given them by that Holy Ghost who will in reality be the speaker of all they say.

This appearance of weakness and consciousness of real power we find very manifestly in the after history of the Apostles. We find them speaking of themselves as the offscouring of all things; and yet, whenever they were put upon their defence, there was given to them a dignity and power of speech which must at once have amazed their adversaries and convinced themselves that their Master's promise was fulfilled. I apprehend that when our Lord told His disciples that it would be *the Holy Ghost* that would speak in them, they could not fully understand Him; *the Holy Ghost* was not yet given, because *Jesus* was not yet glorified, nor could the disciples have any very clear conception of the method of the Spirit's operations; but when the Day of Pentecost was fully come and the Spirit had

descended with power, then they would understand that all the promises concerning the Holy Ghost would be realized to them in a very full and unmistakeable way; and they would feel entirely confident, that He, who had come upon them on that great day with tongues of fire, would really inspire their tongues and put His language in their mouths.

Observe that here, as in other places, endurance to the end is the condition of salvation. It was well for the disciples that they had this condition put before them, and especially it was well for them to remember that there would be an end. However painful their lives might be, they would say, *these light afflictions are but for a moment*, and their true strength would be their unswerving faith in the reality and joys of that life which has no end.

14. *But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains:* 15. *And let him that is on the house-top not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:* 16. *And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.* 17. *But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!*¹ 18. *And pray ye that your flight be*

CHAP.
XIII.
14—23.

S. Matt.
xxiv. 15—25.
S. Luke
xxi. 20—24.

¹ S. Augustine, in his commentary upon Psalm xcvi., gives a curious interpretation of the words, *Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck*. He says: "These words were spoken figuratively. Who are they that are with child, and who are they that give suck? Those souls are said to be with child which have hope in this present world, and those which have obtained what they hoped for are represented by those that give suck. For example: a man wishes to buy a house; he is with child, the thing is not yet done, he is pregnant with

CHAP.
XIII.
14—23.

not in the winter. 19. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. 20. And except that the Lord had shortened these days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days. 21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, He is there; believe him not: 22. For false christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

Quotation
from
Eusebius.

I take this opportunity of inserting a passage from the Christian historian Eusebius. The chapter is headed *The Predictions of Christ*. After having described in the previous chapter some of the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, he adds, "To these accounts it may be proper to add the infallible prediction of our Saviour, in which He foretold these very events as follows: *But woe to them that are with child and those that give suck in those days; but pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath. For there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* The historian (Josephus) adding up the whole number of those slain, says, that eleven hundred thousand perished

hope: he buys the house, he has brought forth his child, and is amongst those who give suck. *Woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck!* Woe to those who fix their hopes upon this present world, woe to those who are bound up with the things of this world which their hopes have brought forth!"

In verse 15 the same father interprets the Lord's words spiritually of being tempted to descend from a spiritual to a merely carnal life, and of looking back in our Christian course.

by famine and the sword, and that the rest, the factious and robbers, mutually informing against each other after the capture, were put to death. Of the young men, the tallest, and those that were distinguished for beauty, were preserved for the triumph. Of the remaining multitude, those above seventeen were sent prisoners to labour at the mines in Egypt; but great numbers were distributed to the provinces, to be destroyed by the sword or wild beasts in the theatres. Those under seventeen were carried away to be sold as slaves. Of these alone there were as many as ninety thousand. All this occurred in this manner, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, according to the predictions of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who by His divine power foresaw all these things as if already present at the time, who also wept and mourned at the prospect, as the holy Evangelists shew in their writings. These give us the very words that He uttered, when He said to this same Jerusalem, *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee.* Afterwards he says of the people: *For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* And again, *When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies, then know that the desolation is nigh."*

CHAP.
XIII.
24—37.

S. Matt.
xxiv. 29—51.
S. Luke
xxi. 25—36.

24. *But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.*¹ 28. *Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. 30. Verily I say unto you, That this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away. 32. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his*

¹ The Greek names for the four points of the compass happen to begin with the letters A, D, A, M. Hence S. Augustine sees in the expression, *shall gather together from the four winds*, a promise of the bringing together again of the scattered fragments of the body of Adam. He says: "Adam himself is scattered through the whole world. He was originally in one place, but he fell, and was in a certain sense reduced to fragments which filled the whole earth; but the mercy of God has brought the fragments together again, and has blown upon them with the fire of love, and made that one which was broken. He knew well how to do the work; let no one despair: it is a great work doubtless, but consider who is the workman. He who made can remake; He who formed can reform."

work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: 36. Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. 37. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

CHAP.
XIII.
24—37.

I have remarked in discussing the parallel place of S. Matthew on the language of S. Mark with respect to the Son: *neither the Son, but the Father*. I would only observe here, in addition, that this is an example of the general scriptural method of dealing with doctrine, and as such is worthy of our deep attention. Divines are tempted to put doctrines in a very compact and logical form, to say that such or such a statement is heretical, because it is opposed to some other which is orthodox; and of course there are statements which are heretical, and there are orthodox doctrines to which they are opposed; but when a doctrine has confessedly and in its very nature two sides, we are very likely to err if we say that a statement of one side of the doctrine cannot be true because it is opposed to an acknowledged truth contained in the statement of the other side. Had not the words been recorded in Scripture and ascribed to our Lord Himself, I believe that the statement concerning the Son, contained in verse 32, would have been regarded by many orthodox divines as inconsistent with the Catholic faith.

The scriptural method of teaching doctrines.

S. Mark reports the prophetic discourse of our Lord as concluding with an emphatic application of the words which He had been speaking to *all* who should hear them. It is manifest that the Lord intended His warnings of the approaching judgment to go beyond those four disciples to whom they were addressed. He

The Lord's warning applicable to all.

CHAP.
XIII.
24—37.

was giving a prediction of things about to come to pass which was to prove the safety, and did prove the safety, of the whole Christian body; and I apprehend that the primary intention of the concluding words of the prophecy was to give a general warning to the whole body of the disciples. But the Lord's words have an application far beyond this: they declare the general character and spirit of all His words, and indeed of all the words of Scripture dictated by the co-equal Spirit: they are not of private interpretation; the message of God is not to this man or that, but to the whole human family: what God says to one He says to all. And with regard to the special message contained in this concluding warning of our Lord, how fitting a message it is for all! Who is there that needs it not? who is there who would not be the better for bearing in mind carefully that a day is coming upon him, as upon all flesh, when he must stand before a judgment-seat, and that he knows neither the day nor the hour when the summons will come?¹

¹ S. Augustine remarks, in speaking of the second coming of Christ, "Why does He say to *all* that which concerns those only who are here when He comes? Because that day will virtually come to each of us, when the day comes in which we shall depart from this world such as we shall be when we are judged in that day. Therefore every Christian ought to watch, lest the day of the Lord find him unprepared; and that day will find him unprepared if the last day of his life find him so."

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAP.

XIV.

I, 2.

1. *After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death.* 2. *But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the people.*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 1, 2.
S. Luke
xxii. 1, 2.

This is the first Passover of which we have any notice in this Gospel. From S. John we find that our Lord did keep the Passover during His ministry, though, for some reason which has never yet been satisfactorily explained, the first three Evangelists have confined their account of the Lord's ministry almost entirely to Galilee. The only Passover mentioned by any one of them is that to which the Lord went, when twelve years old, with His parents. Whatever may be the reason for the plan adopted by the first three Evangelists, certainly it has this advantage, namely, that it brings out into very clear light the one Passover which they do record; it suggests that the connection of our Lord's sufferings and death with that feast was not in any way (if we may venture so to speak) accidental; that there was a special significance in the connection; that in fact the Passover, with its lamb slain and eaten with bitter herbs, and blood sprinkled on the door-posts, was not fully intelligible until *this* Passover gave to all others their interpretation, not destroying the ordinance of God, but in the most unspeakable manner fulfilling it.

Notice of
the Passover
by the
Evangelists.

CHAP.
XIV.
1, 2.

Christ our
Passover.

To ourselves, perhaps, the light which shines upon the sacrifice of the death of Christ from the old Paschal feast of the Jews is comparatively faint. We may indeed gain help in understanding something of its mystery, and we cannot fail to be struck by the manner in which the type set forth the great antitype; but to us the whole history of the Lord's incarnation and life and death and resurrection and ascension is so full of glory, that it rather throws light upon all previous signs and shadows than itself gains illumination from them. To the Jews, however, to whom Christ was first preached, the case would be very different; the triumphant phrase of S. Paul, *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast*, would express the manner in which a devout Jew would be led to find in Christ the substance after which he had long been feeling. In the midst of the disruption and confusion of his country and religion, when God seemed to have forgotten His people, and given them over to their enemies, the believer in Christ would perceive that God had in reality remembered them, that He had visited them so as He had never visited them before, and sent them a new redemption from their house of bondage, of which the first Paschal deliverance was only the faintest sign.

S. Matt.
xxvi. 6—13.

3. *And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster-box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head.*¹

¹ The following is part of Lightfoot's note on the anointing:

"It was accounted unfitting for Rabbins to smell of aromatical ointments. It is indecent, say the Jerusalem Talmudists, for a scholar of the wise men to smell of spices. . . . From this opinion

4. *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. 6. And Jesus said, Let her alone: why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me. 7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. 8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. 9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*

How very much alike are the excuses made in different ages by those who grudge offering to Christ the best things that the world has! Some object to foreign missions because there is plenty to be done at home; and some will not waste money upon handsome churches when the poor require all that can be done for them; and so forth. The excuses are made, not because men care for the accurate performance of the duties in question, but because they wish to avoid the performance of duties altogether. The woman who had anointed Christ with the spikenard had done a good

Excuses for
not making
offerings to
Christ.

everywhere received among them, you may more aptly understand why the other disciples as well as Judas did bear the lavish of the ointment with some indignation: *he* out of wicked covetousness, but *they* partly as not willing that so precious a thing should be lost, and partly as not liking that so nice a custom should be used towards their Master, from which the masters of the Jews were themselves so averse. And our Saviour, taking off the envy of what was done, applies this anointing to His burial, both in His intention and in the intention of the woman, that it might not seem to be done out of some delicate niceness."

CHAP. work; let no one carp at it; let those who think it a
 XIV. mistake hold their peace and do a better; let those who
 3—9. are very anxious about the poor go and do them good; Christ will bless them in doing so; but let not the pretence of helping the poor be made a ground for condemning an act of manifest affection to Himself.

The faith of
 the woman
 who anointed
 the Lord.

The woman seems to have shewn a faith concerning His approaching death beyond that of the disciples. When the Lord says, *she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying*, I think He intends to intimate that she perceived that He *was* about to die, as He said He should: probably she perceived no more than this; there is no reason for asserting that her faith had carried her beyond the grave, and enabled her to anticipate the resurrection of which the Lord had spoken: but if her knowledge on this point was not clear, her love was all the greater. Grant that He was going to die and to be seen no more; grant that no glorious hope of a resurrection lighted up the grave; then the woman had seen enough of Christ already to make her perceive that He was worthy of any effort she could make to do Him honour, and to shew forth her own gratitude and love.

*She hath
 done what
 she could.*

She hath done what she could. For these beautiful words we are indebted to S. Mark. They express the judgment of Christ, not only in the case of the woman who had anointed Him, but in that of every one who endeavours in his own sphere to do his duty and to glorify God. Men may adopt another standard: their eyes may be dazzled with what is grand and sparkling and showy, but God looks into the heart; and as Christ commended the poor widow who threw her two mites into the treasury of God, so in this case He commended

the woman's piety, not because what she had done was the greatest work conceivable, but because she had done *what she could*.

CHAP.
XIV.
10, 11.

10. *And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them.* 11. *And when they heard it they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 14—16.
S. Luke
xxii. 3—6.

This important passage in our blessed Lord's history is given in almost exactly the same manner by the first two Evangelists, the only important difference being, that S. Mark does not mention the sum for which the bargain was made. It should be observed that in all the accounts which we have of the transaction, it is very plainly stated that Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests, not they to him; there was no tampering with his principles; in fact, there was probably nothing that the chief priests expected less than that the means of accomplishing their designs should be supplied by Christ's own disciples. Hitherto their fidelity under trying circumstances had been so true, that it was hardly to be expected that offers could be made to them with any probability of success. The chief priests and scribes several times took counsel how they might destroy Him, but we have no hint that they expected to do so through the aid of Judas. No, it was his own act: he went himself to the tempters, threw himself in their way, himself made an offer of service; and so he illustrated a very general truth: when men are tempted to sin, they are led away of their own lusts and enticed; so lust conceives and brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished brings forth death.

Judas going
to the chief
priests.

CHAP.
XIV.
12—16.

Many persons, says Bede, condemn the crime of Judas as a monstrous and abominable wickedness, and yet take no care lest they commit the same crime themselves. When for the sake of money they speak against the truth, they sell the Lord for money, for He hath said, *I am the truth*. When they disturb society with strife and discord, they betray the Lord, because *God is love*; and therefore they who despise the precepts of love and truth do (as it were) betray Him who is love and truth, especially when they commit the sin in consequence of no infirmity or ignorance, but after the likeness of Judas seek opportunity of exchanging truth for falsehood, and virtue for wickedness.

S. Matt.
xxvi. 17—19.
S. Luke
xxii. 7—13.

12. *And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the Passover?* 13. *And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.* 14. *And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?* 15. *And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.* 16. *And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.*

Particulars
concerning
the prepara-
tion for the
last supper,
as given by
S. Mark.

S. Mark gives us a more particular account of the preparation for the last supper than S. Matthew. He tells us that the Lord sent *two* of the disciples, who (as S. Luke further records) were Peter and John; and he describes the sign which the Lord gave them

in order that they might know the house at which the preparation was to be made: they should meet *a man carrying a pitcher of water* (in which some have seen a symbol of holy baptism), and him they were to follow. S. Mark tells us moreover that the Lord described beforehand the conduct of the man: *he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared.*

These particulars are chiefly valuable as causing us to think upon the kind of preparation which our blessed Lord made for His own death. So far as the history of His death was public, it might be said that His enemies got the better of Him and slew Him; an historian not believing in Him, or not knowing much about Him, might say, "He went about preaching His doctrines for several years without serious interruption; the leading people were always opposed to Him, but He continued to escape their hands, and they were afraid to take any very active steps in consequence of the favour in which He stood with the multitude. At length however they managed to gain possession of His person at one of the Passovers, and having brought Him to a trial they succeeded in getting Him condemned." Looking on from without, this is the kind of view we might form of the Lord's history. I suppose that it is very much the view which heathen historians of the time would take; but when we are permitted by means of the Gospel narratives to look behind the scenes, and to perceive the part which the Lord Himself was taking in His own death, how very false such a view becomes! We then perceive that He Himself knew all, that all was going on with His permission, that it was with His own full consent that He became *our Passover*.

CHAP.
XIV.
17—21.

As an old writer has remarked, "If Christ could influence the mind of the man with the pitcher of water so as to persuade him to receive Him into his house, and this by a mere message, *The Master saith*, what could He not have done in the case of those who crucified Him, if it had not been His own good will to suffer?"

S. Matt.
xxvi. 20—25.
S. Luke
xxii. 21—23.

17. *And in the evening He cometh with the twelve.*

18. *And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me.* 19. *And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?* 20. *And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve that dippeth with Me in the dish.*

Sixth
reference to
prophecy.

21. *The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.*

The whole of the history of the Last Supper agrees almost word for word with the narrative in S. Matthew's Gospel; but it is impossible to read such a portion of history, however often, without having fresh thoughts stirred up in the mind.

The
Apostles
asking, *Is it I?*

What a strange commencement for the discourse of the Lord on such an occasion! *One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me.* There was one of the twelve who understood it, to the rest it was happily a riddle; but we note the full confidence which the disciples had in their Master's knowledge, as evidenced by the fact that they trusted Him more than themselves, and said each for himself, *Is it I?* The eleven were as unconscious of disloyalty as it was possible to be, their hearts were thoroughly free from any thought of treason, but they considered that Christ was greater than

their hearts and knew all things, and that possibly He might have discovered a flaw where they had been able to find none.

CHAP.
XIV.
17—21.

The warning was no doubt given for the sake of Judas, and it seems strange that he did not take it. No one, I think, has completely solved the enigma of his character and conduct. There might be avarice, there might be disappointment, there might be vexation, and there might be a mixture of all these feelings and others besides, but no supposition seems entirely to give the right clue to conduct so strange and in some sense so unnatural. Yet if this be so, is not the character of Judas perhaps all the more worthy of study? Does it not shew us that it is possible for men to be led to commit the most fearful crimes, and yet not to have any distinct explanation to give of their deeds? and are not many sins committed in our own days in the same strange way? Men become sinners by little and little, and then Satan leads them captive at his will, and the only explanation of their conduct is, that they are following the leading of some wicked unseen power.

The conduct
of Judas an
enigma.

Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Woe also, says Bede, now and for evermore to that man who comes to the Table of the Lord with evil intent, who with wickedness lurking in his mind, or with his heart polluted by any abominable sin, does not fear to participate in the consecrated elements of the Christian mysteries. For he too, after the example of Judas, betrays the Son of Man, not indeed to sinners of the Jews, but to sinners notwithstanding, namely, to his own members, to which he presumes rashly to deliver up the inestimable and most holy sacrament

CHAP.
XIV.
22—26.

of the body and blood of the Lord. He also sells his God who, neglecting His fear and love, is persuaded to love and care for transitory and even sinful things instead of Him.

S. Matt.
xxvi. 26—30.
S. Luke
xxii. 19, 20.

22. *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My body.* 23. *And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it.* 24. *And He said unto them, This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.* 25. *Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.* 26. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.*

Eucharistic
contro-
versies.

If we take up any of the publications in which what is called the *Eucharistic controversy* is discussed, and examine some of the questions which arise concerning the manner of the Lord's presence in the consecrated elements, and then look to the inspired narrative of the original institution, what a contrast we find! How different is the atmosphere of that upper room, in which Christ celebrated the Passover with the disciples, from that of many of the rooms in which the mystery of the celebration has been discussed since! How little intimation (if we may venture so to speak) is there that the Feast, which was then instituted so simply and solemnly and affectionately, would prove to be one of the great sources of division and controversy amongst those, who profess themselves disciples of Him who instituted the Feast!

I do not at all mean to urge that there is no mystery and consequently no difficulty connected with the doctrine of the holy Eucharist; it is impossible that

it should be free from mystery; and if a person says, There is no difficulty about it, you have only to take a plain common sense view of it, it is only this or only that, and the like, then we may be quite sure that the view so taken is inadequate, and only seems to be clear because it is extremely shallow. But I think it is quite justifiable to beg of those, who are puzzled by the arguments and counter arguments of divines, to leave modern divinity for a while, and study the original history of the institution of the blessed sacrament. They who do so will be very foolish if they say that this history is such as to shew that there is no difficulty in the matter; the words *This is My body* and *This is My blood* are alone sufficient (one would think) to guard against such folly; but certainly they may come safely to this conclusion, that much of the argumentation of divines is out of place, and that our Lord's own words are much easier to understand than much which has been written in explanation of them. They will be sure also, from the whole tone of the history, that there is a doctrine of the Eucharist intended for the simple, which the wise and prudent may perchance miss, and that it is possible to eat and drink to the satisfying of the soul, though there may be thousands of questions unanswered by divines, ancient or modern, which will remain unanswered to the end of time.

27. *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*
28. *But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.* 29. *But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.* 30. *And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 31—35.
S. Luke
xxii. 31—34.

Seventh
reference to
prophecy.

CHAP. *this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny*
 XIV. *Me thrice.* 31. *But he spake the more vehemently, If*
 27—31. *I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise.*
Likewise also said they all.

The cock
 crowing
 twice.

The account of S. Peter's declaration of his allegiance is precisely the same as that found in S. Matthew, with one exception. S. Matthew gives the words of our Lord, *This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice*, and S. Mark, *This day, even in this night, before the cock crow TWICE, thou shalt deny Me thrice*. The difference is however apparent rather than real; the *cock-crowing* was a mark of time, and did not always imply the actual note of a bird. Now it was believed that the cock usually crowed about midnight, and again at the early dawn, so that the first cock-crowing would indicate midnight, and the second crowing the dawn of day.¹ The latter of these being the more important, as summoning mankind to work, would be considered *the* cock-crowing, and it might also be spoken of with reference to the earlier one as the *second* cock-crowing. The phrase as reported by S. Matthew comes therefore to the same thing as that reported by S. Mark; the latter Evangelist probably gives us the Lord's precise words, S. Matthew translates them into a more ordinary form.

There was, however, good reason why S. Peter, recording his recollection of this important passage in his life, should hand over to S. Mark the Lord's very words. The second cock-crowing might for other people be merely a synonyme for early dawn, but it was not so to him. We find afterwards that the Lord's words

¹ For example, S. Mark xiii. 35: *At even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.*

were literally fulfilled. After the first denial he actually heard the cock crow; it made little impression upon him, and he completed the threefold denial. But when the cock crowed the second time he could no longer misunderstand his Lord's words; then he perceived that the second cock-crowing was much more than the dawn of day, it was the second voice of God to his soul, the second warning to his almost stifled conscience. Others might forget that Christ had spoken of the cock crowing twice; S. Peter himself never could.

CHAP.
XIV.
32—36.

So it is that the words of Christ are often much deeper than at first sight they appear to be; and we never know how much they mean until we have seen their fulfilment, and learnt to interpret them by the result.

32. *And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.* 33. *And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;* 34. *And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.* 35. *And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.* 36. *And he said, Abba, Father,¹ all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 36—42.
S. Luke
xxii. 39—44.

We may seize upon one word in these verses, not as having any importance in itself, but because it commends itself to our hearts as a word which actually

Abba,
Father.

¹ S. Augustine suggests that there may be a mystery in the use of the two words *Abba* and *Father*, and that the Lord may be regarded as speaking in the person of His Church, and implying the union in that Church of Jews and Gentiles.

CHAP.
XIV.
32—36.

passed the Saviour's lips. In this, as in several other instances, S. Mark has preserved for us the very word used when the other Evangelists have given us a translation: *Abba* was one of the sounds which fell upon the stillness of Gethsemane, when Jesus Christ prayed in His agony to His Father in heaven. Does not the occurrence of this word under such circumstances give an additional emphasis to the words of S. Paul, *We have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!*

The Lord urges His prayer with the incontestable truth, *all things are possible unto Thee*; and yet He did so in order that He might shew that all things were not possible: there was at least one thing that could not be, and that was His deliverance from death. The death of Christ was a thing which *must* be; the cross *could not* pass away.

Jesus sore
amazed.

But the chief addition which S. Mark has made to the picture of the Lord's agony is in the word which has been rendered *sore amazed*; Jesus was not only *sorrowful and very heavy*, but *sore amazed and very heavy*. The word expresses something of the nature of fear, horror, alarm: as though the sorrow were not of that quiet subdued kind which belongs (for instance) to mourning for friends and the like, but rather of that kind which is excited by the sight of something horrible, which shocks the nerves and makes the heart palpitate. We must not shrink from the full force of the word which S. Mark has used; it is one which beyond almost all others expresses at once the human and divine nature of Christ: the human, in that He was capable of being *sore amazed*; the divine, in that the future was clothed to His mind in an inexpressible

horror, which would have been concealed from one like ourselves. An old writer¹ says: "Christ is afraid: when Peter fears not, Christ fears. Peter says, I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Christ says, My soul is troubled. Each is true and each is reasonable. The lower fears not, the higher is full of fear. The one as a man knows not the power of death; the other as God in a human body shews forth the frailty of His flesh, that they who deny the mystery of His incarnation should have their impiety rebuked."

37. *And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?* 38. *Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.* 39. *And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.* 40. *And when He returned, He found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy: neither wist they what to answer Him.* 41. *And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* 42. *Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand.*

CHAP.
XIV.
37—42.

S. Matt.
xxvi. 43—46.
S. Luke
xxii. 45, 46.

In the extremity of His agony Christ is left alone. He calls upon His disciples to watch with Him, but the weakness of the flesh is too great; even Peter, who had made such professions of loyalty, is overcome by sleep. Meanwhile Christ wrestles and struggles and repeats the same prayer with increasing earnestness. He is not alone even now, because the Father is with Him, and because angels are sent from heaven to comfort and console Him. The picture is every way both

Christ left
alone in His
agony.

¹ Bede.

CHAP.
XIV.
37—42.

touching and mysterious. Upon the lowest view of the Lord's nature it is most touching, upon the true and high view it is awfully and unspeakably mysterious; but its chief import is seen perhaps when we regard it as figurative and symbolical. Christ was left alone to work out the redemption of man. Peter and James and John were the type of the whole human race: Christ invited them to watch with Him, to assist Him in His great work, to take their share of the burden; but they found themselves unable to help by the value of a straw; not that they did not perceive the necessity, not that they would not willingly have assisted their Master, but because of human infirmity; *the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak*; and so Christ was left to work by Himself, according to the words of the prophet, *I have trodden the winepress alone.*

Man unable
to assist in
the work of
redemption.

Does not this illustrate the true position of Christ with reference to ourselves? Many no doubt are entirely indifferent to His labours; but there are such as Peter and James and John, who are willing to labour and watch with Christ; can they do nothing? No; the essential infirmity of the flesh prevents even the most willing and zealous from taking part in the great work. There is much that they may do, much that they must do; but so far as that great and peculiar work is concerned, whereby Christ made reconciliation for them and for all mankind with the Father, we must hold that they can do absolutely nothing. *It cost more to redeem their souls, so that they must let that alone for ever.*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 47—50.
S. Luke
xxii. 47—49.

43. *And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the*

scribes and the elders. 44. And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. 45. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, Master: and kissed Him. 46. And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him.

CHAP.
XIV.
43—46.

Jeremy Taylor remarks upon the kiss of Judas, that “the holy Jesus had been accustomed to receive every of His disciples after absence with entertainment of a kiss, which was the endearment of persons and the expression of the oriental civility: and Judas was confident that his Lord would not reject him, whose feet He had washed at the time when He foretold this event, and therefore had agreed to signify Him by this sign; and did so, beginning war with a kiss, and breaking the peace of his Lord by the symbol of kindness; which, because Jesus entertained with much evenness and charitable expressions, calling him *friend*, He gave evidence that if He retained civilities to His greatest enemies in the very acts of hostility, He hath banquets and crowns and sceptres for His friends, that adore Him with the kisses of charity, and love Him with the sincerity of an affectionate spirit.”

Remark of
Jeremy
Taylor upon
the kiss of
Judas.

If this be the true view, it exhibits the villainy of Judas in very dark colours. The kiss was more than a mere sign; it was a pledge of faithfulness and loyalty, and it was in the very act of giving this pledge that the treachery was accomplished. So it is that the worst sins are committed against Christ by the profanation of those solemn bonds which bind us to Him; it is not an open enemy whose attacks Christ cannot bear, but

CHAP.
XIV.
47—49.

Two kisses
received by
Christ.

the faithlessness and disloyalty of those who are bound to Him by promises and vows and sacraments.

We read, I believe, of only two kisses which Christ received, and they stand against each other in very striking contrast. There was this devilish kiss of Judas, and there was the kiss of that penitent woman who kissed the feet of Jesus as He sat at meat in Simon's house. What a different spirit under the same outward form! Judas kissed Jesus and hanged himself in remorse, and *went unto his own place*: the penitent woman kissed Jesus, and the Lord said of her to His host, *Thou gavest Me no kiss, but this woman from the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet; wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven her, for she loved much.*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 51—56.
S. Luke
xxii. 50—53.

*Eighth
reference to
prophecy.*

Peter
drawing the
sword.

47. *And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.*

48. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me?* 49. *I was daily with you in the Temple preaching, and ye took me not: but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.* 50. *And they all forsook Him, and fled.*

One of them that stood by—it was S. Peter himself, as we find from the more complete account of the transaction recorded by S. John. I have remarked on former occasions that the selection of facts made by the author of the second Gospel is not always that which we might have expected, had we simply taken account of the tradition concerning S. Peter's connection with it, and had concluded that all events in which S. Peter was chiefly concerned would be found detailed in it more clearly than elsewhere. No better illustration of this

remark can be found than that which is afforded by the verses at present under consideration; Peter drew the sword in his Master's defence, but it is not Peter who records the fact; and as it was observed with reference to the walking on the water, that possibly S. Peter's own modesty might have led him to refrain from dwelling upon the story, so it is probable that the same principle may be applicable here. When the Lord was attacked in the garden by an overwhelming number of His foes all armed and prepared, the single instance of courage and heroism, the single evidence of loyalty on the part of the disciples, was this drawing of the sword upon the high priest's servant; it shewed that at that time at least Peter had no intention of playing false, and if the Apostle in after days had been intent upon composing an *Apology* and not a *Gospel*, he might very plausibly have brought forward into prominence his own conduct at this critical moment: he might have said, I did intend to be faithful, I drew my sword against overwhelming odds, it was only at my Master's own command that I put my sword again into its sheath. And surely the knowledge of the fact that Peter was the man described as *one of them that stood by* does modify our feeling with regard to his subsequent fall; but the knowledge does not come from himself; it was S. John, writing at Ephesus many years afterwards, who first published the fact that S. Peter, whose conduct as the denier of Christ was so well known in the Church, was the only disciple who raised his hand in his Lord's defence. The mention which is made of S. Peter's conduct is contained in the simple and to the disciples not very creditable announcement, *They all forsook Him and fled.*

CHAP.
XIV.
51, 52.

51. *And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:* 52. *And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.*

The young man, with the linen cloth, who followed Christ.

Many commentators, as might have been expected, have speculated who this young man was, and, as might also have been expected, with very little success. No inquiry can in fact be more hopeless; and if any good purpose could have been answered by informing us on the point, we may well believe that the information would not have been withheld.¹

But without entering upon this hopeless enquiry we may perceive one or two advantages arising from these two verses. In the first place they are peculiarly characteristic of the style of this Gospel, in which alone they occur, and they mark the writing of an eyewitness, or at least of one who was immediately concerned in the events he relates. It is almost inconceivable that any one writing a history long afterwards should have inserted a story, which has so little connection with the rest, and no bearing at all upon the principal events which he records. The verses constitute one of those little touches by which, as in the case of paintings, an original may almost certainly be detected.

In the next place, the story seems to reflect some light upon the situation of the Apostles. This young man, who was regarded as a friend of Jesus Christ, and who is marked as such by the Evangelist when he says that there followed *Him* a certain young man, (not the

¹ Jeremy Taylor writes: *John, the evangelist*, who with grief and an overrunning fancy, had forgot to lay aside his upper garment, which in festivals they are used to put on, began to make escape, but, being arrested by his linen upon his bare body, was forced to leave that behind him, that himself might escape his Master's danger.

multitude but *Him*;) was laid hold upon by the guards. The intention therefore was to seize anyone who took the part of the prisoner. In the first instance perhaps this was not so; Judas betrayed Christ, and said *hold Him fast*; but probably after the drawing of the sword by Peter the guards determined to seize anyone who opposed them; and so when they perceived a young man evidently watching them, and following their prisoner, they tried to lay hold upon him. The fear of the disciples therefore was not imaginary; when they forsook Him and fled, it was really necessary to do so, if they would save themselves.

CHAP.
XIV.
51—56.

And may there not be a spiritual lesson? To leave all and follow Christ is the lesson which disciples ought to learn; it is a hard lesson; the Apostles had just shewn how hard it was; but to leave all and save our lives, even though we leave Christ behind us, this is comparatively speaking easy, and men do it by the mere force of instinct.

A spiritual lesson.

53. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.* 54. *And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.* 55. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none.* 56. *For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together.*

S. Matt.
xxvi. 57—60.
S. Luke
xxii. 54.

Bede remarks, "Well might he follow afar off, who was soon to deny his Master so near. Nor indeed could he have denied Christ if he had stuck close to Him. But in this Peter is worthy of our deepest veneration, in that he did not altogether desert the Lord when he was

Peter following afar off.

CHAP.
XIV.
53—56.

so sore afraid. For that he was afraid, this was nature; that he followed Christ, this was devotion; that he denied Him, this was the craft of the devil; that he repented, this was faith. The history may also be taken figuratively. Peter following the Lord afar off may signify the Church following the same Lord, that is imitating His passion, but imitating it afar off. For the Church suffers on her own account: but Christ suffered for the Church."

In the *warming himself at the fire* we have another of those little life-like touches which distinguish this Gospel. S. Matthew and S. Luke have both omitted it, but S. John, who was also an eyewitness, refers to the same thing, more particularly telling us that *the servants and officers had made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them and warmed himself.* This agrees in a striking manner with what we know of the climate of Palestine: travellers tell us of the extreme coldness of the nights, even when the day has been unbearably hot; and so too in the book of the prophet Jeremiah we have the words, *in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost.*

Jerem.
xxxvi. 30.

S. Mark does not tell us of the Lord's being taken first to Annas; the high priest of whom he speaks was no doubt Caiaphas. And here it was that it was intended the trial should take place, for here the Sanhedrim were gathered in anticipation of the coming of the prisoner. Here they sat for the purpose of obtaining evidence against Jesus. S. Matthew says that they *sought false witness*; but S. Mark's expression is, I think, a better one; they *sought witness*; the witnesses would necessarily be false if they testified to any evil as done by Christ, but the Sanhedrim sat with the semblance of

justice; they sifted the evidence that was brought before them, rejecting what could be proved to be false; and they waited until some persons could come forward and give evidence, which should at least have the appearance of being sound.

57. *And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying,* 58. *We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.* 59. *But neither so did their witness agree together.* 60. *And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee?* 61. *But He held His peace, and answered nothing.* Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, *Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* 62. *And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* 63. *Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any further witnesses?* 64. *Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.* 65. *And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.*

S. Paul has availed himself of the expression *not made with hands* in 2 Cor. v. 1, where he contrasts the earthly house of our tabernacle upon earth with the *building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. The expression is a forcible one and I should think that in all probability our Lord had used it, or something equivalent to it, upon the occasion reported by S. John, to which the false witnesses re-

CHAP.
XIV.
53—65.

S. Matt.
xxvi. 60—68.
S. Luke
xxii. 63—65.

The house
not made
with hands.

S. John
ii. 19.

CHAP.
XIV.
57—65.

ferred ; the Jews would at once seize upon it as savouring of magic, interpreting His speech as implying that He could by magic power raise a temple like that of Jerusalem in a night. The false witness, or misrepresentation, of our Lord's words consisted, I apprehend, chiefly in the making Him to have said, *I will destroy this Temple* ; whereas according to S. John he had really said, *Destroy this Temple*, thereby not vaunting of any feat which He would perform Himself, but prophesying what the Jews were about to do. Even in this witness however, S. Mark tells us they did not agree together ; the fact being this, that those who heard the words of our Lord did not at all understand them, and therefore were almost sure to give different versions of them, even though they had no intention of speaking falsely.

I may remark by the way, that the whole of this important examination of our Lord before the Sanhedrim is wanting in S. Luke ; and this is one of many indications that S. Luke never saw the Gospels of S. Matthew and S. Mark in their present form.

One statement of S. Mark seems to require that it should be understood with some qualification. He says, *They ALL condemned Him to be guilty of death* ; but S. Luke tells us that Joseph of Arimathæa *had not consented to the counsel and deed of them* ; and we may well believe that Nicodemus would also be a dissentient, and probably there would be others. Either these just men were absent from the Sanhedrim,¹ re-

¹ It seems worthy of notice, that in describing the meeting at the house of the High Priest, S. Mark uses the phrase, *all the Chief Priests and the elders and the Scribes* ; whereas in describing the meeting of the following morning he says that the Chief Priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes *and the whole council* ; as though the whole council had not been summoned on the former occasion.

fusing to have anything to do in a matter in which they could not do what was right; or else S. Mark uses the word *all* in a wide signification, meaning that the condemnation was carried by an immense majority.

66. *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:* 67. *And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.* 68. *But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.* 69. *And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.* 70. *And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.* 71. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.* 72. *And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

CHAP.
XIV.
57—72.

S. Matt.
xxvi. 69—75.
S. Luke
xxii. 55—62.

We may regard this as S. Peter's own account of his sad fall; and by comparing it with what the other Evangelists have written we see how candid an account it is, how free from all attempt to gloss over the shameful character of his conduct or to make excuse. The Lord gave command to S. Peter *when he was converted to strengthen his brethren*, and we may regard his record of his own denial as one of the chief things which he did in obedience to the command: nothing would be so effectual in preserving his brethren from the like danger and keeping them faithful to Christ, as a confession of his own weakness and the sorrow that it caused him.

S. Peter's
account of
his fall.

CHAP.
XIV.
66—72.

Two points I notice as characteristic of S. Mark's narrative. The first is the mention of the two cock-crowings. I have already commented upon the allusion to the same in our Lord's words to S. Peter, but it is not until now that we see the importance of the two: the second cock-crowing was not (as I have already observed) a mere mark of time, not merely the signal of morning having broken, it was the second cock-crowing in a very emphatic sense, the second *warning*, the second call to Peter's conscience, the second voice of God to his soul. Humanly speaking we may say, it is strange that the first cock-crowing did not call Peter to his senses; he was outside in the porch when it happened, away from the crowd, and pondering (one would suppose) his Lord's words; what a favourable moment for conviction! and it was just at this moment that the cock crew; how could it fail to make Peter think and to make him weep, and so save him from further sin?

However, warnings are of little value without God's Spirit, and we may suppose that it was not God's will yet to call Peter to himself. The second time we are told by S. Luke, when the cock crew, the Lord turned and looked on Peter, and this look had the desired effect; it made Peter *think*. This is the second point characteristic of S. Mark's narrative; he tells us that when Peter *thought thereon, he wept*. His tears were not the effect of a sudden gush of feeling, but the result of dwelling upon the whole history of his fall; he remembered his own professions and the Lord's warnings; he saw now his own cowardice and the blackness of his own sin. If he *did* think upon these things, how could he fail to weep?

CHAPTER XV.

CHAP.
XV.
1—5.

1. *And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.* 2. *And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto Him, Thou sayest it.* 3. *And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing.* 4. *And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against Thee.* 5. *But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.*

S. Matt.
xxvii. 1, 2;
11—14.
S. Luke
xxii. 66—71;
xxiii. 1—4.

Perhaps no portion of the history exhibits the difference between the method of the Evangelists and that of ordinary historians more strikingly than this, in which we read of the taking of Jesus before the judgment-seat of Pilate. Certain facts are given, the explanations which we might have looked for are not given; no comment is made upon the conduct of the rulers of the Jews; and a few verses contain what might very well have been expanded into a chapter, or into several chapters.

Peculiarity
of the Gospel
narrative.

In the morning we find the chief priests holding a consultation with the elders and scribes, and the whole council; apparently a secret consultation, but the steps taken immediately afterwards shew what the matter discussed was. Immediately after they bound Jesus and delivered Him over to Pilate; and doubtless the

Design of
the morning
consultation
of the
Priests.

CHAP.
XV.
1—5.

matter for consultation was, what account they should give to Pilate of their prisoner when He was brought before the judgment-seat; it would be useless to give in a report of the examination of Jesus the night before; if all the evidence had been true, Pilate would have found in it no cause for death; therefore all this must be suppressed, and the new ground taken of Jesus having declared Himself a king. It would be necessary that they should all be of one mind about this, that they should agree upon their spokesman, that they should not contradict each other; hence the consultation which was held concerning Jesus, after He had been declared worthy of death.

S. Mark does not relate the story in very exact order: in one verse he tells us that Pilate asked Jesus, *Art Thou the king of the Jews?* and in the next that *the chief priests accused Him of many things*; it is clear however that the question of Pilate was founded upon the accusations of the chief priests; how else could Pilate have known anything about our Lord's pretensions to be a king? The fact was (I conceive) this; the chief priests had agreed upon the great accusation against the Lord, namely, that He had set Himself up for a king; they had also other accusations, which they threw out as occasion served; but the only one which at all attracted Pilate's attention was that about being the king of the Jews; all the rest was clearly malice, and might safely be set aside, but in the existing state of the country anything connected with treason to Cæsar might, if neglected, involve the governor in trouble. Hence Pilate fixed upon this, and asked Jesus what it meant.

6. *Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner,*

whomsoever they desired. 7. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. 11. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews? 13. And they cried out again, Crucify Him. 14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him.

CHAP.
XV.
6—14.

S. Matt.
xxvii. 15—23.
S. Luke
xxiii. 13—23.

The general turn of the narrative in this part of the history is very much the same in S. Matthew and S. Mark; indeed certain coincidences, such as the remark made by both that Pilate *knew the chief priests had delivered Him for envy*, shew that the source of the two is to some extent the same: but S. Mark has made an addition concerning Barabbas, which (as I have noted in the Commentary on S. Matthew) adds much to the clearness of the history. Barabbas, as S. Mark tells us, lay bound with those who had made insurrection with him; he was not a mere thief, not a mere murderer, but one of a band of insurgents who had been engaged in a popular rising against the government, and who had failed in their attempt, and so had been thrown into prison. On this account probably the chief priests suggested his name as that of the prisoner who was to be asked from Pilate.

Light
thrown by
S. Mark
upon the
character of
Barabbas.

I am not sure as to the manner in which the language

CHAP.
XV.
6—14.

of the seventh verse will strike the English reader; but it appears to me not improbable, that it may be taken by such as implying that Barabbas had made insurrection with others, and that he, Barabbas, had committed murder; as though his guilt were greater than that of his fellows, he having added murder to his other faults. This however is not the meaning of S. Mark's words; the *who* refers to all the insurgents of whom Barabbas was one, possibly the captain, but still only declared to be a murderer as being one of a band of men who had committed violence in their insurrection.

I observe also that there is an apparent reference to the ground on which Barabbas was demanded, in Pilate's question to the people, as given by this Evangelist. Pilate says, *Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?* He uses the title which expresses the alleged crime of Jesus, and thereby virtually says something of this kind, "This is one of your popular champions; this is one of those who set themselves up as the deliverers of your nation; will you have him as the released Passover prisoner?" He thus contrasts in a certain way Jesus and Barabbas, and suggests to them that on their own principles they ought to ask for the life of Him, the only accusation against whom was that He had set Himself up as their king. The argument was good; but the chief priests had delivered him for envy; and in such cases argument has not much force.

S. Matt.
xxvii. 26—31
S. Luke
xxiii. 24, 25.

15. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.* 16. *And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Prætorium; and they call together the whole band.* 17. *And they clothed Him*

with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, 18. And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19. And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. 20. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

CHAP.
XV.
15—20.

The phrase *to content the people* is very expressive: it shews that although Pilate to a certain extent loved justice, there was something that he loved more: he perceived that the fact of his having set at liberty one who was known by the name of *the king of the Jews* might be made to wear a very dangerous look if reported at Rome, and he thought that if he only gave this victim to the people all would be smooth and safe. What was the life of one Jew? Why should he sacrifice his own position for the sake of doing justice in such a case?

The conduct of
Pilate.

This was the view of the matter suggested by a corrupt human heart; and we see here upon a scale of colossal magnitude the contrast between such a view, and that taken by God. The question in Pilate's mind was, whether an innocent man should be sacrificed and himself put at his ease; the real question was, whether the Lord of glory should be given up to the hands of wicked men and by them be crucified and slain. Pilate thought of contenting the people, and forgot that in doing this he would commit a most heinous sin against God.

So Pilate scourged Jesus and gave Him up to be crucified, and the soldiers then took Him to their quarters till the time for crucifixion should be come, and that they might sport with Him meanwhile. S. Mark

Conduct of
the soldiers
in the Præ-
torium.

CHAP.
XV.
15—25.

says they led Him to the Prætorium, and S. Matthew uses the same word, though our translators have rendered it by the phrase *common hall*. The Prætorium was in reality the residence of the governor, and in this residence no doubt a certain number of soldiers would be lodged; these would be the soldiers to whom the Lord was committed, and they would take Him to their own guardroom, and there pass some idle time in mocking Him. The history of this mocking as given by S. Mark differs in no important particular from that given by S. Matthew; we have the purple robes, the crown of thorns, and the derisive acknowledgment of royalty recorded by both. One little point of distinction may be worthy of notice: S. Mark tells us that they smote Him on the head with a reed; what reed? how came it to be there? S. Matthew tells us that it was a reed which the soldiers had put in His hand in mockery for a sceptre.

S. Matt.
xxvii. 32—37.
S. Luke
xxiii. 26;
36—38.

21. *And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.* 22. *And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.* 23. *And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.* 24. *And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.* 25. *And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.* 26. *And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

Simon the
Cyrenian
bearing the
Cross.

Our Lord went forth to be crucified carrying His own cross, but when they met Simon the Cyrenian they compelled him to carry it instead. S. Mark tells

us that Simon was coming out of the country, and as the heathen were called *Pagans*, that is, *country-folk*, some writers have seen in the history a type of the pagans coming out of their old habits of idolatry and taking up the cross of Jesus Christ. This man Simon, who has become notable in Christian history by being called upon to take so very peculiar a part in the Lord's crucifixion, was evidently some one well known among the early disciples; probably having been made to carry the cross literally he afterwards by God's grace carried it spiritually, and became a Christian with his whole house. Alexander and Rufus his sons are mentioned as if they were Christians likewise, and I think there can be no doubt of this being the case. By what different and what strange ways are different men brought to faith in Jesus Christ and His Cross!

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XV.
21—26.

It may be worth while to notice, as illustrating the independence of the four Evangelists, that the form of inscription over the cross which was so public a document is not given in precisely the same form by any two of the Evangelists. Here are the four forms:

S. Matthew: *This is Jesus the king of the Jews.*

S. Mark: *The king of the Jews.*

S. Luke: *This is the king of the Jews.*

S. John: *Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.*

The super-
scription as
given by the
several
Evangelists.

Now it may be said of events which take place that no two witnesses are likely to give precisely the same account, each describing that which he saw from his own point of view; but here we have the account of a writing, which was certainly expressed in a definite form of words, and in no other form; and yet when we look for the report of this we find discrepancies in the details. The words *the king of the Jews*, however, identify

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21—28.

them as one; this was the pith of the accusation and this was common to all. May we not gather hence a useful lesson concerning Scripture in general, and the Gospels in particular? Substantial identity, superficial variety,—this is the law of their composition.

S. Matt.
xxvii. 37.
S. Luke
xxiii. 32, 33.

Ninth
reference to
prophecy.

27. *And with Him they crucify two thieves, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left.* 28. *And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.*¹

S. Mark calls to mind that the crucifixion of the Lord between two thieves fulfilled the prophecy which said, *and He was numbered with the transgressors*. It would be an imperfect view however to take of the matter if we were to suppose that now for the first time this prophecy was fulfilled; we should rather say, that the Lord's whole life was a fulfilment of the prophecy, that it was fulfilled when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and was exhibited in its most striking form of fulfilment when He was crucified on Calvary. For, in truth, what was the whole sojourn of our Lord upon earth in a human body but this, a taking part with transgressors, a humbling of Himself to the condition of sinners, a voluntary leaving of His heavenly glories to become one of a race who had broken His Father's laws? As the cross was the culminating point of all the sufferings and self-denial of the Lord, so was it the chief exhibition of the fulfilment of this prophecy to which S. Mark refers.

The super-
scriptions of
the thieves
crucified
with the
Lord.

The Evangelists speak of the two men between whom Jesus was crucified as *thieves*: how did they know what their crime was? Possibly from a superscription written

¹ I have registered this verse in the margin as containing a reference to prophecy; but it ought to be observed that the verse is very possibly not genuine, being omitted by almost all the best MSS.

up over their heads, as a superscription was written up over that of Christ: it was a common practice to put over the heads of criminals the crimes for which they suffered: and if this were so, the contrast between our Lord and the two men who hung on either side of Him would be very noticeable to all passers by. There would be three men hanging together: you look up to see what they have done: you see that two of them are crucified because they are thieves, and one because He is a King! You wonder at the different causes which have led to the same result; but if you study the Scriptures and learn to understand the ways of God, you soon perceive that you have here the profoundest and truest view of His dealings with men. Sin brings death, and that is why the two thieves die; but there is (as it were) also a royal road to death, and this is the road by which Christ reaches it: He dies because He has *not* sinned, but because He is the king of those who have.

29. *And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,* 30. *Save Thyself, and come down from the cross.* 31. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save.* 32. *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.* *And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.*

S. Matt.
xxvii. 39—42.
S. Luke
xxiii. 35, 36.

The principal feature of the picture set before us in these verses is the shame and consequent pain of the crucifixion. We see the Lord Jesus raised up on the cross, and His agonies not exciting compassion, but calling forth the rude remarks and graceless reproaches of those who witnessed them: and the effect produced

The shame
and pain of
the Cross.

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29—32.

upon our minds can hardly fail to be that which the inspired writer, or the Holy Spirit through him, intended that it should be. If the effect be anything at all, it must be that of a deep sense of the sufferings which our blessed Lord was pleased to undergo; and when we take the sufferings in connection with the fact that they were for us men and our salvation, our hearts must be hard and cold indeed if they are not moved with a sense of gratitude and a determination to love and serve Him who underwent so much for us.

But if we look away from the principal feature of the picture and endeavour to understand all the parts of it, some effort will be necessary. We find S. Mark speaking of three classes of persons who reviled the Lord on the cross: there were those who passed by and wagged their heads, there were the Chief Priests and Scribes, and there were the thieves crucified with Him. For the first we may perhaps say that it is of little importance to consider what actuated the minds of mere passers by; and the only remark I think it necessary to make is, that although Christ was crucified as having endeavoured to make Himself king of the Jews, no sooner is He crucified than the old charge about destroying the Temple is cast in His teeth, as though He had been condemned for that. Then again with regard to the thieves, we know from S. Luke that it was not strictly true that they both reviled Him: one did so, the other maintained His cause: and the consideration of their case is best left to its own place in S. Luke's Gospel. But for the Chief Priests and Scribes, what shall be said? what was really at the bottom of their hearts? if you could have turned them inside out, what motives would you have found? This is a question

made more significant by the words of S. Mark, *the chief priests mocking said among themselves*; it was not merely a lying mockery which they propagated among the ignorant people, knowing that it *was* mere lying mockery, but it was their own private conversation, and therefore probably represented to a considerable extent the real thoughts of their hearts. What shall we say concerning them? I think we must regard them in this, as in other instances, in the light of men blinded by their own sinful conduct: their condition was made more fearful than it otherwise would have been by this fact, that they had now persuaded themselves that they had done God service in crucifying His well-beloved Son.

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29—36.

33. *And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* 34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*¹ 35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias.* 36. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down.*

S. Matt.
xxvii. 45—49.
S. Luke
xxiii. 44.

The comparison of the Lord's words upon the cross, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* with the comment upon them by the bystanders, affords as good an instance as we can well have of the possibility of persons hearing words with their outward ears and missing the force of them. Some explanation of the

The effect
of the Lord's
words from
the cross on
the by-
standers.

¹ Lightfoot notes, "In Matthew it is *Eli, Eli*, in the very same syllables of Psalm xxii. 1. Mark, according to the present dialect, namely, the Chaldee, useth the pronunciation of the word *Eloi*."

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33—36.

misunderstanding may perhaps be found in consideration of the language which our Lord used; but the fact whether explained or not is this, that while the Son of God on the cross was addressing Himself to His Father in the most wonderful words ever uttered, persons standing by heard nothing but a superstitious exclamation of a dying man to a departed saint. How differently must these words have sounded in the ears of those who understood them, and (if there were no human beings present to understand them) in the ears at least of those ministering spirits who doubtless were near the cross! and what a lesson is it to us to take care how we interpret any of the words, which Christ spoke for our instruction while upon earth.

Light
thrown upon
the Book of
Psalms by
the Lord's
use of it.

It is almost needless to remark upon the sanction given to the Psalms by the circumstance of our Lord's quotation from them in His death agony. It was not I suppose merely that the words which He quoted expressed the feeling, which His soul desired to utter, more appropriately than any other words, but rather that the adoption of words from the sacred writings of God's ancient Church threw a light upon those writings, and connected Him with the ancient Church in the most marked way possible. A Jew might often have read the words in the Psalm, and might have been led to believe that they and the other words of the same Psalm expressed a bitterness of anguish beyond anything that the writer of the Psalm could ever have known from experience; he might even have been led to refer them in some way to Messiah; but he never could have conceived of the literal applicability of such words to the sufferings of Him, whom he expected to be a glorious Lord and King. Would not the adoption

of the words lead a Jew to think, and perhaps to take a new view of the whole of the Scriptures, and to see in many of the ancient prophecies clear indications of Jesus of Nazareth?

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XV.
33—41.

37. *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.* 38. *And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* 39. *And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.* 40. *There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses, and Salome; 41. (Who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.*

S. Matt.
xxvii. 50—56.
S. Luke
xxiii. 45—49.

There is a difference of some importance between S. Matthew and S. Mark as to the effect produced upon the mind of the centurion. S. Matthew tells us that *when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God;* whereas S. Mark tells us nothing of the earthquake, but that *when the centurion which stood over against Him saw that He so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.* Now it is not necessary to suppose, that the mind of the centurion and those with him were uninfluenced by the sights and signs which they saw, merely because S. Mark has omitted to refer to this circumstance after the manner of S. Matthew; but I think we may infer that S. Mark saw enough in the account which he has given to make the conduct of the centurion intelligible, without the additional particulars furnished

Effect produced upon the mind of the centurion.

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37—47.

by S. Matthew: that is to say, the cries of Christ on the cross and the manner of His death, full of weakness as they might seem to be, had yet something in them which appealed to the heart and judgment of a heathen soldier, and constrained him to confess the righteousness of Him whom he had been engaged in crucifying. So it is frequently found that weak things are changed by God's Spirit into strength, and that those portions of the Gospel which seem the least powerful do in reality chiefly affect the human heart, and prove to be the power of God unto salvation.

Note that while the hard Roman soldier was confessing Christ, the other witnesses were *women*: they had accompanied the Lord from Galilee, having followed Him and ministered to Him there, and now as He hung upon the cross they still testified their love and sympathy by watching His sufferings and death.

S. Matt.
xxvii. 57—61.
S. Luke
xxiii. 50—56.

42. *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,* 43. *Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.* 44. *And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.* 45. *And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph,* 46. *And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.* 47. *And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Josès beheld where He was laid.*

The history
of the burial
as given by
S. Mark.

The history of the burial of our Lord is given by S. Mark without any important variations from S. Mat-

thew; the account is, as usual, a little more circumstantial; for example, S. Mark tells us that when application was made for the body of the Lord, Pilate expressed his astonishment that death should have taken place so soon, and made enquiry of the centurion before he granted the request; from which we learn incidentally that the death of our Lord took place earlier than was usual with those crucified, and we find a coincidence with S. John, who tells us that the legs of the two thieves were broken to hasten their death, but that the Lord was passed by because He was dead already.

S. Matthew calls Joseph of Arimathæa *a disciple of Jesus*, and S. Mark describes him as one *who waited for the kingdom of God*. I suppose that the two descriptions are to be regarded as meaning the same thing, and each may be used to throw light upon the other. Also this is to be observed, that if in the early days of the Gospel a disciple of Jesus could properly be described as one who *waited* for the kingdom of God, then a disciple of Jesus can probably be described in these days as one who has *found* the kingdom of God, who has been able to recognise God as the king of the whole earth, asserting and exercising His sovereignty through Jesus Christ His Son. This at least is certain, that unless we acknowledge ourselves to be true and loyal subjects of the kingdom of God, we cannot be true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; the mere belief in our own individual salvation will not establish our right to be called disciples. It may be added that disciples of Christ must even now in a certain sense be *waiting* for the kingdom of God: the kingdom of God is come, but only partly so; it is still coming; we still pray daily that it may come, and the entire estab-

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42—47.

lishment of the kingdom will be the consummation of our privileges as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Joseph *went in boldly*, or dared to go in, to Pilate.

The bold-
ness of
Joseph.

It was perhaps not a service of actual corporal danger, but it was at least a service from which many would have shrunk: to declare himself on the side of one who had just suffered as a malefactor, to go to the ruler and ask as a special favour to be allowed to take away His body, this was a task which few would have undertaken, and I have no doubt that S. Mark expressed the character of the act correctly when he spoke of it as the deed of a bold man.

CHAP.
XVI.
1—4.

CHAPTER XVI.

S. Matt.
xxviii. 1.
S. Luke
xxiv. 1, 2.

1. *And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* 2. *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.* 3. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?* 4. *And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.*

The con-
stancy of the
women who
came to the
sepulchre.

The women here mentioned by name are they who were spoken of before as beholding the crucifixion from a distance. They are a very good example of persons acting up to the light vouchsafed to them; they knew

not the Scriptures, that Jesus must rise again from the dead, and therefore having seen their Lord crucified and buried they came for the purpose of anointing His body. They shewed that their love was by no means shaken by all that had taken place; even if all their hopes had perished in the tomb they yet could never forget what Christ had done for them, and they would at least do honour to His remains, however much the world might scoff at them and account them fools.

It is evident that the thought of a resurrection had never entered the minds of these women; all that they thought of doing was to pay the last sad tribute of affectionate respect to One, whom they had loved and revered while living; but having done what they could, God did for them what they could not do for themselves; having believed in the Lord's death, and having not stumbled at the burial, God revealed to them the mystery of the resurrection.

They came to the sepulchre *at the rising of the Sun*: a fit season for such a visit; and typical of the great truth that Jesus Christ is risen to be the Sun of Righteousness, and the source of light and health to all those who awake out of their sleep and arise from the dead.

Note also how early the women came to the sepulchre, and how determined they were not to allow any ordinary cares and engagements to stand in the way of their great duty. They did not know how the great stone would be rolled away for them: they knew they could not do it for themselves, but they believed that God would clear all difficulties out of their way: and so He did: when they looked, the stone was rolled away. So Christ's disciples will ever find it; insuperable

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1—8.

difficulties may seem to stand between them and Him, but if they only seek Him early and with earnestness of purpose, God will roll away all the great stones and reveal Christ to their hearts.

S. Matt.
xxviii. 2—8.
S. Luke
xxiv. 3—7.

5. *And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.* 6. *And he said unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him.* 7. *But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.* 8. *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.*

A lesson
concerning
Christ's
resurrection.

These women may teach us the right way of arriving at a true knowledge of Christ's resurrection. They had first followed Him in Galilee, and ministered to Him there; then they had come up after Him to Jerusalem; there they watched the closing scenes of His ministry, and were witnesses of His death on the cross; and lastly, they were first at the sepulchre, and when they found the stone rolled away they went in to pay the only tribute of respect still possible to the body of their Lord: and this constancy of affection was rewarded abundantly; they were permitted before others to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and to be messengers concerning the same to His disciples and to Peter.

I say that these women may teach us the right way of arriving at a true knowledge of Christ's resurrection, because it is not as a mere prodigy, testified by competent witnesses, that this great fact of the Christian

dispensation must be regarded, in order that its importance may be realised. It is necessary to follow Jesus (as it were) through His ministry, to see Him in His sorrows, to listen to His teaching and acknowledge that no man ever spake such words as He, to look upon Him when crucified, and finally to rejoice in the resurrection as the event which crowns the whole and saves us from being driven to the confession, *Our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.*

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XVI.
5—8.

It may be noted that the effect upon the minds of the women of the new revelation, which had been made to them, was to cause great fear and trembling. This shewed that their knowledge of the resurrection was real. They did not merely repeat the words, "I believe in Jesus Christ, who has risen again from the dead;" they perceived that they were standing upon very awful ground, when they occupied the floor of that tomb in which the body of Christ had been laid. True faith will ever produce something of the nature of fear and trembling: Jacob said, *How dreadful is this place! the Lord was in this place and I knew it not!*

Tell His disciples and Peter—this was the way in which Christ dealt with him, who said he was not a disciple. I think S. Peter would blush, if he heard any claim laid on his behalf to supremacy over the rest of the Apostles on the ground of this message: the words *His disciples and Peter* would certainly not suggest to him, that he was so great that he might not be mentioned in the common herd, but rather that he was least of all, and not worthy to be called a disciple, because he had so shamefully and so cruelly denied that Christ was his Lord.

His dis-
ciples and
Peter.

9. *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day*

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9—11.

*of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.*¹ 10. *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.* 11. *And they, when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.*

Mary Magdalene the first witness of the resurrection.

Mary Magdalene is here described by that title which makes her so remarkable as one of the foremost disciples of Christ. She was the woman *out of whom Christ cast seven devils*; a description which sufficiently shews the depth of degradation from which she had been raised by the Lord's mercy and power; she has in fact become the type of those of her sex, who having fallen into the pit of corruption have been drawn thence by the grace of God, and restored through penitence to the ways of holiness. Now was it not wonderful that Mary Magdalene, being such as she was, should have been the very first person who was permitted to see the risen Lord? The evangelist in recording the fact seems to have felt the marvellous character of it, and to have added the description, *out of whom Christ had cast seven devils*, in order that his readers might

¹ The passage commencing with this verse and extending to the end of the Gospel is probably not by S. Mark, but an addition made by some person in apostolic times. Dean Alford sums up the case thus: "On external grounds its authenticity and authority are beyond any question. Our only inquiry then is as to its genuineness as a work of the evangelist Mark. And here internal evidence is, I think, very weighty against Mark's being the author. No less than seventeen words and expressions occur in it (and some of them several times) which are never elsewhere used by Mark, whose adherence to his own peculiar phrases is remarkable. The inference therefore seems to me to be, that it is an authentic fragment, placed as a completion of the Gospel in very early times: by whom written, must of course remain wholly uncertain; but having just the same claim to reception and reverence as the rest of the Gospels."

not fail to perceive the same. I think that *we* should have regarded the blessed Virgin Mother, or the beloved disciple John, as the more probable person to be chosen as the first witness; but in this, as in so many other things, God's choice is different from ours; and this at least we may learn from the circumstance, namely, how thoroughly Christ does the work of healing and restoration; if Mary Magdalene could be raised from her condition of spiritual wretchedness into one of such exalted privilege, what a powerful operation must that of Christ be, and in what case need we despair?

And the spiritual condition of Mary Magdalene is rendered more notable by the contrast in which it is put with the unbelief of the Lord's more especial disciples. Mary Magdalene seems never to have doubted the identity of her risen Lord, and her evidence following upon the message they had already received and upon all the previous instruction given them ought to have convinced the disciples at once; but they *believed not*; they were mourning and weeping, and the news that Christ had been seen did not comfort them; the news seemed too good to be true, and they could not bring themselves to accept it. Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven devils had been cast, is now the believer and the preacher of Christ; the chosen Apostles are the unbelievers, who will not receive the message concerning Him.

12. *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.*

13. *And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.*

S. Luke gives us a detailed account of this walk into the country, in which Jesus appeared to two of His

The Lord
appearing in
another
form.

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XVI.
12, 13.

disciples *in another form*. He tells us that *their eyes were holden that they should not know Him*; and in fact they did not know who their companion was, although He walked with them, and talked with them, *and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*, until in the evening *He took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave unto them, and their eyes were opened and they knew Him*. This difficulty in recognizing the Lord, which we may note as a fact connected with His other appearances after the resurrection, is what S. Mark expresses by saying that *He appeared in another form*: it is difficult to realize what kind of change it was, for it was such that it amounted to a perfect disguise at first, and yet when the eyes were opened there was no doubt in the minds of the spectators of the Lord's identity. The truth is that we are treading upon the boundaries of the spiritual world, and the rules of sense and sight begin to lose their applicability. This however we may note, that while the two evangelists are describing the same fact, one of them attributes the result to a change of form on the part of our Lord, the other to a restraint put upon the eyes of the disciples; and we may learn therefore not to be too precise and positive in drawing conclusions from the language used by the evangelists in describing those portions of our Lord's history, which transcend our ordinary experience.

What was the result of this second appearance of Christ upon the minds of the Apostles? Again we read, *neither believed they them*. Strange perhaps that this should have been so; but stranger still that the evangelist should have been so careful to record the unbelief, and in such unqualified terms. Probably he intended

to shew us, that there was no strong prejudice in favour of the resurrection which made the Apostles accept the report of it without good proof, that on the other hand there was every disposition to disbelieve it, that the disciples had not in the least expected it, and that they were only made to accept it by overwhelming evidence. We may regret their unbelief for their own sakes; but we cannot fail to perceive, that in the good providence of God their unbelief was permitted for the more confirmation of the faith.

14. *Afterwards He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.* 15. *And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

Let us draw a sharp line of distinction between the unbelief of the Apostles concerning the resurrection of the Lord, and the unbelief of the Scribes, Pharisees, and the rest, of which we hear so much in the Gospels. This latter unbelief was for the most part that of men unwilling to believe, an unbelief which our Lord rebuked by saying, *How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?* it was what may be called a moral unbelief, and this is why it proved so incurable. The unbelief of the Apostles was culpable, for we see that Christ upbraided them for it; but it was culpable on very different grounds and in a very different degree from that of the Scribes and Pharisees; the Apostles would have been most glad to believe; there was no moral bar to hinder them, and in fact they very soon did believe; the difficulty in their way was merely the

The unbelief of the disciples contrasted with that of Scribes and Pharisees.

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XVI.
14, 15.

exceeding wonderfulness, the extraordinary character, of the fact they were called upon to admit; it was hardness of heart, not rottenness of heart, which stood in the way of their faith.

Christ appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and soon dispelled their doubts: it was He Himself: they could doubt no longer, and they listened to the accents of His voice again with full hearts and minds relieved from an overwhelming anxiety, even while He told them of their hardness of heart and rebuked their unbelief. And the transition from their condition of unbelief to one of greater privilege than ever was consequently immediate; there was no need for any period of probation; those who in one verse are rebuked for unbelief and hardness of heart, are commissioned in the next to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Nor are these two things unconnected: it was the trial of the Apostles' faith, which had fitted them to be preachers of the Gospel; it was because they had been brought by slow and painful discipline to acknowledge the truth of Jesus Christ, that they were able to declare without doubt or fear of refutation this great truth to the world.

Observe, before leaving these verses, the universal character of the Lord's commission to His Apostles. It was not *the eleven* only, upon whom the weight of the command to *preach the Gospel to every creature* fell; they indeed could only have given scant performance to their Master's words at best; they of course were bound to labour in the spread of the Gospel; but it was as representatives of the Church of Christ through centuries to come, that they received a command in trust for posterity, the carrying out of which was to be the test of the Church's fidelity and the means of her own growth.

16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

CHAP.
XVI.
16.

It is very easy to make the words of the sixteenth verse the ground of controversy. It may be argued that baptism is an indispensable requisite to salvation, because our Lord says, *he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*; it may be argued that baptism is not an indispensable requisite, because our Lord in speaking of condemnation says only that they shall be condemned who do not *believe*. If, however, instead of looking in the words for arguments either for or against any particular view of faith and of baptism, we look to the general spirit of the words, and consider the circumstances under which they were spoken, we can find, as I apprehend, very little difficulty in them. Our Lord was not giving an explanation of the meaning and efficacy either of faith or baptism; He was giving general directions to His Apostles concerning the manner in which they should spread His kingdom; they were to go everywhere to preach it, and they were to admit men into its fellowship by the ordinance of baptism; to believe was therefore to accept the message of the kingdom, and to be baptized was to seal the belief in the manner appointed by Christ, and to enter into complete fellowship; not to believe was to reject Christ as king, and those who did this of course would not be baptized. Hence I should understand our Lord as declaring His kingdom, His Church, His Gospel, as the power of God unto salvation, and the rejection of the same as involving condemnation. There is no difficulty in the words if we take them thus; and the Apostles, who were armed with them, would not consider that they were in possession of a divine definition of the

The need of
baptism and
of faith.

CHAP.
XVI.
16—18.

respective importance of faith and baptism, but would rather remember their Master's words as the ground of the great work committed to them, from which neither faith nor baptism could possibly be excluded.

17. *And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

The signs
which were
to follow
those who
believed.

The consideration of these verses should make us cautious in the interpretation of Scripture. If a person should take the words by themselves, or rather with reference only to the verse immediately preceding them, he might conclude that the power of working miracles was the invariable mark and proof of true faith in Christ: for in the preceding verse we have the declaration, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, and then in immediate connection with this we find the promise, *these signs shall follow them that believe*: whence it might seem to be a just and inevitable conclusion, that they who believed in such a manner as to escape damnation should also by their belief be exalted to that condition in which it would be possible for them to work miracles. Taking the words merely as we find them, how can we resist the conclusion? and if the fallacy of the conclusion proves that there must be some fallacy in the argument, ought we not to draw a lesson of caution as to the drawing of conclusions in general?

The fact seems to be that we must interpret our Lord's words by reference to the history of His Church which followed. We find that signs *did* follow those who believed in His Name, but not all of them, not

invariably, not throughout the whole subsequent history of the Church. *God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul*: here is an instance of the Lord's words coming true: but many believed and died in the faith, concerning whom no such statement could be made. As S. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, there were *diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*; and it might in general be made quite evident, without any outward visible sign, whether a man believed in the Lord Jesus Christ or not. An inward spiritual grace might often exist without any outward visible sign.

1 Cor. xii. 4.

The question of the disappearance of miraculous powers from the Church is one of much difficulty; the mass of mediæval miracles we may without much hesitation throw aside; but the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries testify to miracles in their days, in a manner which it is difficult to understand, if no such power were then vouchsafed.

19. *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.* 20. *And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

These concluding verses of S. Mark's Gospel very much favour the supposition, which many learned men have made and which is supported by considerations arising from the style of the language employed, that the last twelve verses of the chapter were a subsequent addition to the history, made probably in the time of the Apostles, but not by S. Mark himself. The Lord's ascension is mentioned as an event well known, and introduced here for the sake of giving completeness to the history; no explanation is given of the circum-

CHAP.
XVI.
19, 20.

stances, nor any description of the occasion upon which it took place, but it is stated in general terms that after the Lord had spoken to the disciples He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God ; He assumed that position, which it was the general faith of the Church that He occupied. And the subsequent conduct of the Apostles is related in the like general manner ; *they went forth and preached everywhere* ; but we know that they did not do this immediately ; they waited in Jerusalem until they received power from on high ; the events of the day of Pentecost had first to take place, and there was much to be done in Jerusalem itself before the general mission to the world could be commenced. The last verse gives us, in fact, a condensed view of the whole of the early history of the Church ; it is the general moral and conclusion to the whole of the Gospel ; and it carries us on to the later history too, shewing us what the duty is of those disciples of Christ, who have had the opportunity of knowing the deeds of Christ upon earth.

The Lord worked with them. So He does still ; His arm is not shortened, nor His love diminished ; and though there be no *signs following*, such as blessed and supported the early labourers, yet there are signs of another and more spiritual kind, which are quite as remarkable and quite as valuable as testimonies that Christ is with His Church.

THE END.

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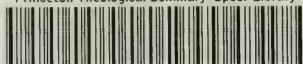
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